

**An investigation into pedagogical knowledge and teaching practices of reading among primary school teachers in Botswana.**

Submitted by

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to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in TESOL

(December, 2012)

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Signature: R. T. Mokotedi

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to the memory of my late father, Lokwe Selebogo, who believed in me when I did not believe in myself.

## **Abstract**

The thesis focuses on teachers' pedagogical subject knowledge and teaching of reading in English as a second language (L2) in Botswana Primary Schools. The participants consisted of ten teachers from four lower primary classrooms setting. To carry out the research, I adopted the qualitative methodology. The three modes of inquiry used in the study are semi-structured interviews, classroom observations and stimulated recall interviews. All the data were transcribed, coded and analysed qualitatively. For organisation purposes, the NVivo 8 software package was used in handling the interview data gathered from the study.

The findings revealed that teachers' classroom practices were not always consistent with their pedagogical subject knowledge. They demonstrated having knowledge on how reading ought to be taught and it was observed that in most cases, their beliefs were not put into their classroom practices. This research highlighted the importance of the phonics instructions in teaching early reading, which most of the teachers' practices revealed that they lack confidence in teaching. Therefore, this seems to have an impact on the learners in lower classes because this level is considered the foundation, which needs solid base of reading strategies. Most recent studies have revealed that a lack of phonics based on reading instructions leave learners without important decoding skills necessary in recognizing letter/sound relationships in reading. It emerged that most of the activities observed focussed on word level because more emphasis was placed on decoding than comprehension. Although the study indicates that teachers face a number of challenges, which might have an impact in practising their espoused beliefs, it seems that they did not get proper foundation from pre-service training with phonics instructions.

Hopefully the insights presented in this study can lead to increased awareness of how reading can be effectively taught and how teachers base classroom practices on their experiences and the contexts within which they work.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank God for the strength He provided me to go through this difficult task. If it were not because of His grace, I would not have produced this piece of work. Completing this research project was one of the most demanding challenges I have ever faced. This work provided countless opportunities for my personal reflection and growth and could not have been possible without the guidance and support of so many people.

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to my supervisor, Professor Debra Myhill for her invaluable guidance. She continuously steered me in the right direction and provided me with professional guidance on the practical side of the research. She also acted as my mentor by giving me strength and encouragement, especially in the most difficult period of my research. Her profound knowledge and experience in the field of Literacy has greatly enhanced my understanding of the processes involved in pedagogical underpinnings of L2 reading. She always inspired me to explore beyond what I thought possible and her insightful comments on my work always included an encouraging word. I am grateful for her ability to help me look at the same issue from many different perspectives in order to bring out the best work in me by approaching research in a more critical manner.

My special gratitude goes to the teachers who participated in the study, may I say, without your assistance in this research, my work, would be futile. My friends also deserve a special gratitude.

To my mother, Badirwang Selebogo, brothers and sisters whose prayers, their best wishes and encouragement kept me going from the beginning of this study to the end.

My husband, Gideon, deserves an acknowledgement for being supportive during my study. To my adorable children, Sello (Ronnie), Maipelo (Connie), Masego (Candy), Gamme (Tonnie), Kefhilwe (daughter in-law) whose prayers, patience, understanding, support and most of all their love kept me going are highly appreciated. I am indebted to Gamme (Tonnie), who witnessed my struggle; for his excellent listening skills, thoughtful advice and unending support when I was overwhelmed with work.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.0 Introduction**

Learning to read is important to a child's personal, social and economic well-being because it is not only a basis for educational success but also an important occupational and lifelong skill. Therefore, how teachers address reading is critical as their pedagogical practices should aim at producing good readers. The chapter discusses the following subheadings: rationale of the study, research aims and questions, purpose of the study, significance of the study, overview of the study and conclusion.

### **1.1 Rationale for doing the study**

There are two main reasons why I decided to conduct this research study. The first is related to my personal experiences as a primary school teacher and language lecturer with more focus on the methodological aspect of teaching in primary schools. Throughout the years of my teaching career, I have noted that most of the problems that teachers face are teaching reading in primary schools as they find it more difficult and challenging. This is because primary education is the foundation on which further learning is based. Therefore, teaching and learning rely heavily on reading different texts across the curriculum.

The pressure for teaching reading is a major challenge for teachers in preparation stage (Standards 1-4) because they are accountable for the learning success or failure of their learners in upper standards. However, it has been noted that the quality of the learner's performance in the Primary Final Examinations has not been encouraging. In this context, focusing on teachers' pedagogical subject knowledge and their teaching practices in reading is vital for this research study. If teachers' instructional approaches in reading are consistent, balanced and comprehensive, then they could produce learners who can read and comprehend texts with confidence across the curriculum.

## **1.2 Research questions**

The research approach and methods must be designed specifically to address the research questions which are formulated to help the researcher to focus on the study. The research questions must also give the researcher guidance on how to conduct the study. These questions were set up to explore teachers' pedagogical subject knowledge and teaching practices of teaching reading in Botswana Primary Schools. Therefore, the study will be guided by the following research questions:

1. What pedagogical subject knowledge underpins the teaching of reading in lower primary education?
2. What teaching strategies do teachers use to teach early reading in the second language?

## **1.3 Purpose of the study**

The major objective of the study is to explore and identify teachers' range of pedagogical subject knowledge and how they apply theory to practice. The purpose of the study is specifically to achieve the following aims:

1. To investigate in depth if teachers instructional approaches and methods in reading are consistent, balanced and comprehensive to produce learners who can read and comprehend texts with confidence across the curriculum.
2. To identify possible gaps in the pedagogical approaches used by teachers in teaching reading to young learners in Botswana.

## **1.4 Significance of the study**

The study has been undertaken as a result of my professional concern as a Primary school teacher and teacher trainer, focussing on methodological aspect of teaching languages (Setswana and English). My experience revealed that the teaching and learning of reading needs to be improved as teachers and learners seem to be struggling, especially with reading. Therefore, the study is significant because it is likely to contribute to a better understanding of how the pedagogical subject knowledge of teachers is espoused in their pedagogical classroom practices.

The findings from this study are important for the Botswana Ministry of Education (MoE) as it is responsible for assigning duties to Curriculum Development & Evaluation. They design the curriculum and provide teachers with resource materials for teaching and learning of reading. Teacher Training and Development (TT&D) is accountable for producing teachers with the methodology and approaches they utilise in the teaching of reading.

Teacher Training and Development will benefit from the study as it is responsible for all teachers and teacher educators as they have implications for teaching practices, education and professional development. The beneficiaries are also the teachers who do the spade work, because they are implementing the curriculum objectives and developing reading skills. To cater for effective reading, they have to be selective in their approaches and methods as well as the texts they use.

The research findings would guide teachers on the different and useful approaches on how they could teach reading to early English Speakers of other Languages (ESL). Furthermore, the findings could help the Education authorities evaluate and review the present teaching methods used for reading, thereby leading to either modifying or introducing new ones. The study also draws the attention of the education policy makers including TT & D and in-service teachers to the dangers of having a gap between theory and practice.

### **1.5 Overview of the study**

The structure of the thesis is as follows:

**Chapter 1** is based on the underlying rationale for my research study, the aims of which are the proposed research questions. In addition, the purpose of the study and the expected significance of it have been discussed.

**Chapter 2** describes the context of my research study. It gives the brief history of Botswana, an overview of Botswana Primary Education, literacy and reading across the curriculum and teachers' professional development in the teaching of reading.

**Chapter 3** of the study deals with the literature related to how reading could be taught in second language. It also focuses on the definition of reading and the underlying processes involved with reading. In addition, different models of reading and types of reading instructions are discussed. Focus is placed on how the teaching of reading draws most upon the principles of social learning theory and constructivist approaches.

**Chapter 4** of the study deals with the methodological aspects used in the study. This includes a description of the interpretive mode inquiry used and a rationale for adopting the interpretive research paradigm. The ethical consideration and the validity of the study were also discussed.

**Chapters 5 to 7** present the findings of the study. **Chapter 5** provides an analysis of the preliminary semi-structured interview, which gives a picture of teachers' subject knowledge and their pedagogical beliefs.

**Chapter 6** provides an analysis of the data from the classroom observation, which is organised around teaching behaviour. This is identified by the instructional features that characterized participants' practices in the classroom observed.

**Chapter 7** provides analysis of classroom behaviours of the three identified case studies. These are matched against their espoused pedagogical subject knowledge from the preliminary semi-structured interviews and with their introspective commentaries in the stimulated recall interviews.

**Chapter 8** discusses the findings generated from the data collected in relation to the literature and their pedagogical and methodological implications in the field of research.

**Chapter 9** presents the implications of the findings and pose recommendations for teacher education, educational research and curriculum developers in the Botswana context. This will be followed by suggestions of areas for further research.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

This chapter illustrates to the readers the background of this research study. The rationale and purpose for conducting the study, the research questions, significance and overview of the study have been discussed. It sets an introductory sense for the following chapters which discusses the educational context of Botswana.



## Chapter 2: Research Context

### 2.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide relevant information about the research context of this present study. Therefore, I offer a detailed description of the context where this research study took place.

### 2.1 Brief history of Botswana

Botswana is a landlocked nation on the southern African plateau neighboured by Zimbabwe, Namibia, Zambia, and South Africa. Botswana gained its independence in 1966 when it ceased being the British Protectorate of Bechuanaland. The Tswana speaking ethnic groups are the majority in Botswana. They comprise about 70% of the country's population and are settled in nearly all parts of the country. The rest of the population which is about 30% speak about 28 other languages and is made up of several other ethnic groups (Maruatona, 2004). Botswana has been one of the most stable and peaceful nations on the African continent and has a popularly elected government in a multi-party system. English has special status as an official language of education, government and international communications. Setswana is the national language, despite the fact that it is not the indigenous language for all people (Presidential Task Force, 1997).

According to the Presidential Task Force (1997), “Botswana contains a diversity of tribes with different languages that are not equally recognised, and there are signs of disunity and separateness” (p. 26). Furthermore, in their Long Term Vision for Botswana, it is promised that:

*“Botswana’s wealth of different languages and cultural traditions will be recognised, supported and strengthened within the education system. No Motswana will be disadvantaged in the education system as a result of a mother tongue that differs from the country’s two official languages”*  
(Presidential Task Group, 1997, p. 26).

However, since the current language policy is based on the argument that a common language would bring about national unity, the consideration of minority concerns still constitutes one of the major challenges to the mainstream dominant Setswana culture.

## **2.2 Overview of Botswana Primary Education**

Primary school education comprises of seven years leading to the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE). Each year at Primary level is a standard and the government strives to make this level of education accessible to everyone. The objective is for children to be literate first in Setswana and then in English. According to Republic of Botswana/United Nations, 2004, from 1995-2000, the estimated enrolment rate for primary school children aged 6 - 12 was consistently above 95%. Over the same period, the gross enrolment ratio was at least 11% points higher than the net enrolment rate because some children start school late and some dropouts do return to school.

Education has been a key development priority for Botswana since independence. There have been two major documents guiding the development of education in Botswana; ‘Education for Kagisano’ (Republic of Botswana 1977) and the ‘Revised National Policy on Education’ – RNPE (Government of Botswana 1994). For primary level the Ministry of Education takes over all instructional control, designs, and implements the syllabuses through the Department of Curriculum Development and Evaluation.

Curriculum development starts from principles. Education for Kagisano (Social Harmony) is the guiding philosophy of education for Botswana, with its underlying principles of democracy, self-reliance, unity, development and ‘botho’ (humanity) (Republic of Botswana, 1977). Therefore, when new curricula are written, there is a need to reflect these ideals in terms of content, teaching and learning methods, and assessment methods. Initiatives to this effect reflect Strategic objective 3.3.1 of the Ministry of Education Strategic Plan 2001 – 2006 which is: “To develop and implement learner centred teacher training programme by Jan. 2004”. (Ministry of Education, undated). However, Education for ‘Kagisano’ is not the only set of guidelines that exist.

The Curriculum Development Division operates through subject panels and promotes consultations in the development of educational programmes.

This division is responsible for reviewing, revising and developing syllabi; for creating instructional materials; and for adapting published materials for curriculum needs. It is noteworthy to mention that English teachers throughout the country participated in consultations and workshops to help shape the syllabus (Republic of Botswana, Ministry of Education, 2005b), thus highlighting that even though teachers are not included in the committee developing the curriculum, they participate in shaping the syllabi.

The curriculum policy is specifically developed for the use of Second Language learners in Botswana. This is because what constitutes a curriculum subject has much to do with educational policy, attitudes and the approaches taken by policy-makers to national identity. Therefore, both of these factors impact upon pedagogical practices (Republic of Botswana, Ministry of Education, 2005b). The approach to English teaching in the curriculum is communicative (the language principle), learner-centred (the broad principle) and activities based (Ministry of Education Strategic Plan 2001- 2-6; ‘RNPE’ Government of Botswana 1994). However, there is overwhelming evidence from different kinds of sources, that the idea has not taken root in classrooms (Republic of Botswana, 1977) as teaching is teacher-centred.

Language policy in Botswana states that the medium of instruction is English from grade 2. As the language learning and teaching methodology is communicative, it shows that the Government of Botswana is aware of the need for quality literacy learning as the policy emphasizes “the acquisition of communication, numeracy and literacy skills” (Republic of Botswana, Ministry of Education, 2005b).

The curriculum is structured around the four language skills and reading through a combination of phonics and whole language learning is done in standards 1 and 2 as most of the learners come across English language for the first time. Nonetheless, on the whole an eclectic approach to reading is taken seriously. Extensive reading is also included in the syllabus, aiming to develop love for reading in learners, and skills for utilizing a library and handling of books. In most of the schools this would be a reading corner in the classroom instead of an actual library with ample

literature. The 2004 Status Report of the Millennium Goals concludes that Botswana has achieved universal access to primary education (Republic of Botswana/ United Nations, 2004). However, there has been a high rate of failure and school dropout, especially in the remote and small settlement areas that are commonly associated with low development and retention of reading and writing skills (Presidential Task Group, 1997).

An attainment literacy and numeracy test is an initiative for learners in Standard 4. This is used as a tool for planning remedial teaching in English, Setswana and Mathematics. Nevertheless, the results of attainment tests showed that learning is not very effective at the early primary school level. In 2001, only 39.6% were literate in Setswana, 21.9% had reached the desired competency level in English, whilst only 21.2% had done so in basic numeracy (Republic of Botswana/ United Nations, 2004). According to the Republic of Botswana/ United Nations, (2004), the major constraint that Botswana is facing relates more to issues of quality than of access. Republic of Botswana (1993) has noted that the quality of teaching is the most important determinant of the quality of education. However, the effectiveness of teachers' instructional approaches and methods in the beginning stage of learning how to read should be consistent, balanced and comprehensive in order to produce learners' who can read and comprehend texts with confidence across the curriculum.

### **2.3 Literacy and reading across the curriculum**

The first National Commission on Education, which was appointed in 1976 to review problems and prospects in the design and delivery of education in Botswana, recognized that "a fully literate population is an important long term objective if Botswana's other national objectives are to be met". It also indicated that "literacy should not be pursued in isolation from other development programs" (Republic of Botswana, 1977 p. 67). Since then, literacy has been fully adopted in the political discourse of the government as part of the national development effort because literacy is seen as a social problem to be solved through education.

The first official definition of literacy was stipulated in the 1979 National Initiative Consultation document of the Ministry of Education on the planned literacy programme (Ministry of

Education, 1979, cited in Youngman, 2000). The term ‘literate’ shall be interpreted “to imply that a person can comprehend those written communications and simple computations which are part of their daily life” (Ministry of Education, 1979, cited in Youngman, 2000 p. 259). This definition is very much in line with the one adopted by the UNESCO General Conference (1978), which states that a “literate person is one who can, with understanding, both read and write a short simple statement on his/her everyday life”. However, this concept of literacy is quite narrow in the sense that:

- it is not including the possibility to become literate in other languages spoken in Botswana (including English),
- it is reducing the instrumental skills to “comprehension” and to those issues that are part of “daily life” (UNESCO General Conference, 1978).

Therefore, the intention of the RNPE (1994) was to raise the quality of education in primary schools. This is because within the overall system of formal education, it provides the foundation upon which other levels of education rests. This is the most important level of education as at this stage the intellectual and social character of the child is established (RNPE, 1994). For some learners Setswana, which is the national language, is also their mother tongue (L1) and for some it is their second language (L2) while English is either their L2 or third language (L3).

In 1994, English was officially introduced as the language of instruction from standard 2 in Botswana (RNPE, 1994). Due to the fact that learners have to read in English in order to learn almost all of the subjects in the curriculum and to communicate internationally, they need a sound foundation in literacy and reading skills. The education system of Botswana’s focus is in reading to learn as a tool for successful progression and completion of each standard done by learners. Therefore, learners find themselves in a situation where teaching and learning rely heavily on reading books. Furthermore, their linguistic, cognitive and socio-cultural domains are not yet fully developed at an early stage (Nyati-Ramahobo, 1999). This puts them under a lot of pressure as their reading culture does not match with what they have to do to read for all the subjects across the curriculum. For this reason, the pressure for reading is also a major challenge for teachers because they are accountable for the learning success or failure of their learners.

Reading is a vital component of any national curriculum and the learners' early success in learning English as a second language. It is seen as a major contribution to a positive start to school success as one of the goals of basic education is the development of permanent literacy and numeracy (RNPE, 1994). This is in realization of the fact that reading is one of the most rewarding pursuits in life and an art that is central to human development. However, the apparent decline in reading achievement in our school systems stares us all in the face. Researchers and educators continue to explore the various facts of the problem towards proper diagnosis and intervention (RNPE, 1994).

In an attempt to address the problem of declining achievement in reading, a few schools initiated the implementation of the English Project as a supplement to the Breakthrough to Setswana Literacy programme, which was introduced by the Ministry of Education. However, this initiative is not supported by Ministry of Education even though there seems to be a noticeable difference in classes implementing English Project which focuses on phonics instruction to those not following the method. In this light, nothing is documented unlike Breakthrough which "had been made a national development priority and was supported from the Deputy Secretary downwards through departmental heads to inspectors" (Peacock & Morakaladi, p. 406).

The teachers' concern might have emanated from the Botswana curriculum emphasis that phonics instruction should be addressed and there are particular underlying phonics aspects specified in the syllabus for teachers to address (Botswana Lower Primary Syllabus, 2010). Peacock & Morakaladi, (1995) indicate that even though the Breakthrough method was carried out "with consistency and some success in standard 1 classes, [teachers] did so mechanically, and did not always show a full understanding of the principles involved" (p. 401). Therefore, adopting the principles of Breakthrough to teach English project might also be problematic because the development could also be hindered by lack of resources, trained personnel and support from Ministry of Education. This might also lead to confusion and conflicting views on the practising schools as they use different improvised guidelines, in teaching the English Project because they do not have a prescribed manual to follow. Therefore, it is not surprising that the standard 2 teachers collectively were of the view "that Breakthrough was simply a standard 1 package" (Peacock & Morakaladi, 1995, p. 410). In this light, one could clearly state that the

introduction of phonics instructions to early readers seems to be still in its infancy. This is because very few primary schools have initiated the implementation of English Project and this development might be problematic as it is not recognized by the government in Botswana as a teaching approach.

Based on my knowledge as a lecturer, I believe an important area on which the search light should be beamed is teachers' pre-service preparation in the teaching of reading skills. This is because critical pedagogy can help to alleviate reading problem. It has become evident that educators must do more to prepare children in literacy learning for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which is also the goal of Botswana Vision 2016 (Presidential Task Group, 1997). This research paper would contribute to the accomplishment of this goal by examining how standards 1 - 4 children are taught to read. It would also account for how they comprehend subjects across the curriculum and the possibilities literacy and reading skills could create for them. These skills would enable them to become contributory citizens in the local and global communities. Literacy development calls for effective teaching methods and during pre-service, student teachers must be trained to acquire competency in teaching reading and remediation strategies. In our case this is a problem because teachers do subject specialisation during pre-service but teach as generalists during in-service.

As a teacher and lecturer, I have discovered that a child's attitude to reading is conditioned by his/her perception towards the teacher's and parents' attitude to reading. If teachers and parents enjoy reading themselves and refer to books for information, then the child is more likely to think of reading as enjoyable and useful and thus advancing the learner's literacy development. However, in our case this is difficult because not every parent is literate. Reading is best practised socially and therefore, reading a variety of texts that celebrate a variety of cultures provides social cultural understanding which is very important for young learners and is the root of literacy. Culturally diverse learners need materials that reflect and celebrate their culture because they need opportunities to share their perspectives as they read across the curriculum (Nyati-Ramahobo, 1999). However, most of primary schools in Botswana do not have school libraries and therefore lack the diverse texts needed for literature circles.

Theoretical bases for learners' reading competence vary depending upon the availability of reading materials. This is because family is also seen to influence, affect the success and failures of selected reading literacy programmes implemented in the schools. The existence or system of communication used between the school and parents is another factor affecting children's learning. This is because lack of information on literacy development limits parents' involvement in helping their children with reading. This is because being knowledgeable about children's literacy, supporting the school program in literacy and developing their oral language will support later literacy for lifelong learning. The traditional approach in literacy and reading skills are important aspects in learning for the society and the individual. However, the most important and crucial phase is the early years of schooling when children are first learning to read as they set the stages for later learning. Therefore, without the ability to read, excellence in high school and beyond is unattainable (UNESCO General Conference in 1978).

#### **2.4 Teachers' professional development in the teaching of reading**

Student teachers are exposed to reading methods and techniques during training. Those who specialise in Languages have an advantage over those who study them as minor subjects or an intensive module. Therefore, teachers who studied languages as minor subjects during pre-service encounter problems when they have to use language teaching methods because they were not fully developed in that area. According to researchers, the limited use of reading strategies in the subject matter classroom appears to be the result of lack of teacher training in reading methods (Republic of Botswana/ United Nations, 2004). The recommendation of the RNPE, (1994) emphasises, that culture of reading amongst Botswana should be promoted to develop habitual reading for lifelong functional and leisure purposes, and to cultivate any reader's analytic and critical thinking. Therefore, teaching methods should aim at equipping learners with all the sub-skills of reading, which would make their reading across the curriculum much easier. This could be only addressed if teachers understand, know and use the reading strategies utilised by learners when reading for comprehension across the curriculum.

ESL in Botswana context only means that English is used as the medium of instruction in education, but does not imply that it is the language known or spoken by most people (Nyati-



Ramahobo, 1999). The curriculum of Botswana starts with what learners are expected to learn. It then focuses on the creation of teaching and learning environments that will assist learners to reach desired learning. Finally, it involves the use of assessment that can provide feedback about the level of learning that has been achieved (Republic of Botswana, 1977). Curricula commence with a focus on listening, speaking, reading and writing in the first year, with an increasing focus on the skills as the years progress.

One of the cultural problems is that English is not the language of the learners' cultural identity. In most of Botswana government schools, the learners only meet English when they start school and because of the cultural problem, even at primary, English is not fully used as a means of communication. Therefore, learners have sociological and psychological problems in the sense that they fear expressing themselves incorrectly. Therefore, learners need cultural change, where it could be normal for them to communicate in English at earlier stages for the sake of improving their literacy skills (Republic of Botswana, 2002). Therefore, finding out if teachers in primary schools, especially in lower standards, recognise the importance of providing reading instructions that would aid learners to comprehend subjects across the curriculum is vital for this research. This is because there is evidence that as learners progress to upper standards, they struggle in reading of which is an indication that they lack reading skills.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

Primary education is the basic education which aims at preparing children to attain the competence needed to advance further in making a worthwhile contribution to society. This is constantly undergoing changes. In order to fulfil this objective, teachers must keep abreast with current thinking, and engage in training that will enhance the teaching - learning process. Central to the success of the teaching - learning process is the level of attainment by children in the area of reading. Unfortunately, this has created cause for concern in many societies, as the high rate of illiteracy continues to adversely affect the progress of a technological advancing world. Since reading forms the basis for all other areas of learning, it is necessary to ensure that children in lower primary standards attain proficiency in reading. Having highlighted on the context of the study, the next chapter will review the relevant literatures in the field.

## **CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **3.0 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to consider the empirical literature and theoretical thinking relating to the teaching of reading and to teachers' pedagogical subject knowledge. It explores different theoretical perspectives of the teaching of reading, and considers the politicised debates in western, especially Anglophone, countries around an appropriate pedagogy for the teaching of reading. It concludes by considering how the research literature will inform the design of the study.

### **3.1 Reading**

Reading is a critical academic skill, supporting learning in almost all curriculum domains; and it is an important life skill, enabling readers' access to literate discourses, and to greater economic and social well-being (Cain, 2010; UNDP, 2009). Although literacy has received much attention from governments and organizations of different nations in recent years, UNESCO's statistics for year 2000 reveal that illiteracy rates of undeveloped countries vary from 10 to 55 percent. This indicates that in extreme cases half of an adult population (15 years of age or older) cannot read proficiently. In Botswana, the rates of illiteracy are 19% when drawing from the literacy rate of 81% reported by United Nations Development Program, (UNDP, 2009) and the government is concerned to improve this in order to secure economic and social wellbeing. Surviving in today's world without the ability to read is seriously limited, if not impossible, because reading is a key to success in school. As Freire, & Macedo, (1987) argued, in becoming a reader we learn to 'read the word and read the world'. Freire & Macedo's linking of the word and the world signals that reading is both a cognitive linguistic process of matching words on the page to words in the head, and a social process of making meaning from texts and contexts. Yet, the act of reading is neither completely understood nor easily described.

Put simply, "reading is what happens when people look at a text and assign meaning to the written symbols in that text" (Aebersold & Field, 1997, p. 15). Learning to read is, therefore,

fundamentally a meaning-making process of making sense of text. According to Grabe & Stoller, (2001, p. 9), reading is “...the ability to draw meaning from the printed page and interpret this information appropriately”. It is a process of decoding symbolic representations in print into words and ideas. Aebersold & Field, (1997) argue that reading involves the reader, text, and an interaction between the reader and text. In other words, the act of reading is an active construction of meaning. Reading, therefore, cannot be regarded simply as a set of mechanical skills to be learned once and for all but rather as a complex process of making meaning from text for a variety of purposes and in a wide range of contexts.

Reading is thus a complex skill requiring the coordination of a number of interrelated sources of information and consequently, involves the interrelatedness of five components of reading, namely, phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension (Kern, 2000). Furthermore, it is an interactive process in which learners construct and extend meaning from life’s experiences, language, print and non- print materials. It also involves the social world which the reader inhabits – his or her world knowledge and experience, the language discourses which she or he inhabits, and his or her previous experiences as a reader.

### **3.2 Theoretical models of reading**

The theoretical framework of which the rest of the thesis seeks to explore focuses on the cognitive and social processes that explain the nature of learning to reading in a broader perspective.

#### **3.2.1 Reading as a cognitive process**

One theoretical framework for understanding learning to read is reading as a cognitive process. Cognitive perspectives focus upon the individual and the mental processes which are orchestrated in the act of reading. Therefore, reading involves a series of interlinked cognitive processes addressing the main approaches that explain the nature of learning to read. It involves the development and orchestration of the cognitive processes which facilitate the interpretation of print on the page, the graphemes, into the phonemes which they represent, and then into the words which those phonemes build (Stott, 2001).

### **3.2.2 The bottom-up model**

The Bottom-up model (Stanovich, 1990) is a theoretical account of reading which conceptualises reading as a process of moving from the parts to the whole (Dechant, 1991; Rassool, 1999). Readers construct words as units by recognising the graphemes in a word and the phonemes they represent, and using this knowledge to ‘decode’ the word: thus this is often termed ‘decoding’. According to the model, it is argued that, with increasing proficiency, the process of constructing the text from small units become so automatic that readers are not aware of how it operates, especially when they are beginning to learn how to read (Eskey, 1988; Stanovich, 1990; Aebersold & Field, 1997).

In the bottom-up model the reader arrives at understanding by first combining or decoding, different text elements. Comprehension is thus the transforming of previous phonological data into meaning. Moreover, the bottom-up model of reading is characterized by a linear process of joining lower-level text items and gradually adding them together until a meaningful chunk of data is created (Aebersold & Field, 1997). This kind of text processing is believed to be typical of weaker L2 readers and or L2 readers who are tackling texts beyond their comprehension skills. In such cases, readers adhere to bottom-up decoding processes as they cannot immediately draw meaning from the text (Goodman, 1994). Critically, in practice, of course, this means that L2 readers can learn to effectively decode text accurately without having any corresponding understanding of the text they have decoded.

Dechant, (1991) critiques the bottom-up reading model because it emphasizes a single-direction, part to whole processing of text and in the beginning stages, it gives little emphasis to the reader’s world knowledge, contextual information, and other higher order processing strategies. Therefore, learning to read is reduced to a strictly serial process (Aebersold & Field, 1997) developing a considerable range of habitual responses to a specific set of patterns of graphic shapes. In essence, the bottom-up model is about word recognition (Rassool, 1999). Moreover, the effectiveness of a bottom-up approach is very dependent upon the phonic regularity of particular languages, and English is very frequently phonically irregular. For example, the letter

cluster *ough* represents /ɒf/ as in *cough*, /aʊ/ as in *bough*, /u:/ as in *through* and /ʌf/ as in *enough*.

### **3.2.3 The top-down model**

In contrast to the bottom-up model, the top-down model attempts to take account of the wide set of knowledge and understandings that a reader brings to the process of making sense of text. The theory argues that readers bring a great deal of knowledge, expectations, assumptions, and questions to the text. Therefore, given a basic understanding of the vocabulary, they continue to read as long as the text confirms their expectations (Dechant, 1991). According to Aebbersold & Field, (1997, p. 18), “The top-down school of reading theory argues that readers fit the text into knowledge (culture, syntactic, linguistic, and historical) they already possess, then check back when new or unexpected information appears”. Therefore, understanding how they read and how their reading process may differ from others in the class is part of the teacher’s preparation for teaching reading (Dechant, 1991).

Dechant, (1991) argues that top-down reading models suggest that processing of a text begins in the mind of the readers with an assumption about the meaning of a text. From this perspective, readers identify letters and words only to confirm their assumptions about the meaning of the text, as comprehension is the basis for decoding skills because meaning is brought to print (Dechant, 1991; Goodman, 1994).

The model is also known as the whole to part model because it emphasizes that what the reader brings to the text as reading is driven by meaning, and proceeds from whole to part (Rassool, 1999). Although Goodman, (1994) is often referred to as a leading advocate of the top down approach, his model by his own admission is the interactive model which is one that uses print as input and has meaning as output. But the reader provides input too, even at an early reading stage, because while interacting with text, the reader is selective in using as few of the cues from the text as necessary to construct meaning. Rather than focusing exclusively on decoding each word, in the top-down model the reader uses grammatical cues, and his/her knowledge of syntax,

semantics, texts and world contexts to create predictions of where the text is going, which informs interpretation of the text (Rassool, 1999).

A top-down reading model is thus almost a complete contradiction of a bottom-up model. Goodman (Goodman in Barnett 1989, p. 19) presents it as "an interaction between reader and written language, through which the reader attempts to reconstruct a message from the writer." He also calls the model "a psycholinguistic guessing game." This is because if cues and predictions are inaccurate or a reader gets stuck, there are no 'word-attack' strategies for determining how to say/read an unknown word.

### **3.2.4 The Interactive model of reading**

An interactive reading model recognizes the interaction of bottom-up and top-down processes simultaneously in the reading process. The interactive model of reading argues that the reader adds new information to existing understanding including the knowledge of words, existing knowledge, and syntactic knowledge (Rumelhart, 1996). According to Grabe & Stoller, (2002, p. 18) reading is interactive because "linguistic information from the text interacts with information activated by the reader from long-term memory, as background knowledge." Therefore, linguistic understanding and background knowledge play an important role in interpretation of the text. This coincides with the findings of the study carried out by Myhill & Brackley, (2004, p. 274), that reported that "children's existing schemata are powerful bases for supporting new learning or indeed for confounding it". Moreover, a diverse collection of reading materials and activities will promote the interaction of background and texts. Barratt-Pugh and Rohl, (2000, p. 25) suggest that "effective literacy involves decoding text, recognising the meanings of text, understanding the purposes of different texts and uncovering and challenging the ways in which texts construct the world."

The first scholar to develop a working and applicable interactive reading model in all situations was Rumelhart, (1996). According to Rumelhart, (1996), the interactive process of reading begins with the reader looking at items kept in a place in one's mind where all the words and their corresponding spellings are stored. The feature extraction device is employed to extract characteristic features of words stored in a visual information store and place them in the pattern

synthesizer (Rumelhart, 1996). The last stage involves a pattern synthesizer arriving at meaning by processing syntactical, semantic, orthographic and lexical knowledge together with items received from the feature extraction device. It is important that the pattern synthesizer handles all the knowledge sources simultaneously. If any of the sources is insufficiently developed, the interpretation depends more on other sources (Rumelhart, 1996).

According to Dechant, (1991) the interactive model suggests that the reader constructs meaning by the selective use of information from all sources of meaning without adherence to any one set order. The reader simultaneously uses all levels of processing even though one source of meaning can be given priority at a given time. Barnett, (1989, p. 26) states: “top-down models do not account for the situation in which a reader has little knowledge of a text topic, therefore, cannot form predictions”. Therefore, characterizing reading as an employment of a range of processes which begins with the automatic recognition of words and then involving reasoning, knowledge of the world, and knowledge of the topic represents a more adequate description of the reading process.

### **3.2.5 Schema Theory**

Pre-existing knowledge or existing concepts about the world stored in mental representations are referred to as schema. Both interactive and top-down models of reading build upon schema theory (Aebersold & Field, 1997; Urquhart & Weir, 1998). The former engages the pattern synthesizer which processes previous knowledge to acquire meaning, the latter benefits from schema in the stage of predicting, which would not work if the reader did not have any preliminary knowledge, which can often be the case for many L2 beginning learners (Aebersold & Field, 1997; Urquhart & Weir, 1998; Parviz, 2003; Yusuf, 2010). Bensoussan, (1998) argued that schemata are built from past experience, sometimes in a hierarchical order when learning how to read. Therefore, remembering is a constructive process that assists in drawing on schemata that are often not closely connected. It is widely accepted that prior knowledge about the topic of a reading material is an essential factor in achieving comprehension (Yusuf, 2010). According to Urquhart & Weir, (1998) each of us carries in our heads mental representation of typical situations that we come across. When we are stimulated by particular words, discourse

patterns, or contexts, such schematic knowledge is activated and we are able to recognize what we see or hear because it fits into the pattern that we already know.

The construction of meaning depends on the reader's knowledge of the language, the structure of texts, knowledge of the subject read, and a broad-based background or world knowledge. As we can see, it is not only the background knowledge that is vital to understand written text, but also previous knowledge about the structure of texts (Aebersold & Field, 1997). Furthermore, Aebersold & Field, (1997) and Urquhart & Weir, (1998) are of the opinion that content schemata are composed of background information stored in the learner's memory closely tied with the cultural backgrounds and the cultural aspects of a text read are often interwoven with the content to be read. Research has shown that the readers who are given culturally specific background information before reading a text recall more of a passage than their counterparts who have not been provided with such knowledge (Prichard, 1990; Bensoussan, 1998). Furthermore, studies on L2 reading revealed that L2 speakers, just like native speakers of English, integrate textual cues and background knowledge of the text they already have when they read (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). Readers draw meaning out of the text based on their existing linguistic and schematic knowledge as well as the input provided by the text (Swaffar, Arens & Byrnes, 1991). Kern, (2000) has argued that "the reader, in turn, must reconstruct a context of interpretation based not only on the cues provided in the writer's text, but also on the reader's own experience and knowledge" (p. 109).

Formal schemata are the knowledge of different types of rhetorical organization of texts. It is believed that English text organization is usually linear while the configuration of Asian texts, for example, is mostly circular (Carrell, 1987). It causes comprehension problems for both groups when reading texts of non-native rhetorical organization as the readers cannot find points of rhetorical reference in texts. Therefore, Carrell, (1987) concludes that results of a study on the interaction of content and formal schemata for intermediate L2 students show, not surprisingly, that when both form and content are familiar to a reader, the reading is relatively easy; when both form and content are unfamiliar, the reading is relatively difficult.



Viewing reading as a cognitive process assists the development of a reading teacher's pedagogical understanding of learning to read. Spiro & Meyers, (1984) and Grabe & Stoller, (2001) suggest that in order to achieve comprehension, readers have to reconstruct and reorganize a text mentally, linking new information to that already stored in the memory, forming new coherent mental pictures. However, processing can be constrained by different factors such as readers' individual cognitive characteristics as well as by the specific properties of texts (Spiro & Meyers, 1984). Stott, (2001) argues that overwhelmed, young L2 readers often lack the schema necessary to make connections before reading, while reading and after reading. Enriching schemata requires the learners to add new knowledge, and also to contribute information to the existing one, so schema must be built and activated throughout the reading process (Aebbersold & Field, 1997; Urquhart & Weir, 1998).

### **3.2.6 The Simple View of Reading**

The Simple View of Reading (SVR) argues that decoding skills and language comprehension skills are essential for normal reading to take place (Gough & Turner, 1986; Gough, 1990). Consequently, the SVR provides that "decoding is also of central importance in reading, for without it; linguistic comprehension is of no use" (Hoover & Gough, 1990, p. 128). Therefore, from this perspective, adequate knowledge of decoding skill and linguistic comprehension are equally important for the learner to be a successful reader. In some ways, the simple view of reading is an attempt to reconcile those who emphasise bottom-up models as all-important compared with those who adopt a more top-down, whole language approach. However, the SVR has limitations because it does not take into account factors which relate to the reading process such as background knowledge which is vital in teaching learners how to read (Stuart, Stainthorpe & Snowling, 2009; Kirby & Savage, 2008). According to Stuart, et al. (2009, p. 56) "cultural influences are inevitably brought to bear in understanding written texts, and they are implicit in the Simple View of Reading". Subsequently, considerable research has found that for L2 readers, background knowledge plays an important part in reading (Urquhart & Weir, 1998; Fresch, 2008; Yusuf, 2010; Stott, 2001). Cain, (2010, p. 74) noted that "for both local and global coherence, readers need to incorporate background knowledge and ideas (retrieved from long term memory) to make sense of details that are only implicitly mentioned". Furthermore, Kirby & Savage, (2008) noted that the SVR takes no account of the different procedures involved in

listening and reading comprehension and suggested that illustrations may make a difference because pictures in texts for less proficient readers can help them overcome problems of word identification and thus, aid comprehension in L2 reading.

The SVR proposes that proficient reading involves recognizing the words read and understanding language comprehension processes by which texts as well as spoken language are understood and interpreted (Gough, 1990; Kirby & Savage, 2008). Cain, (2010, p. 77) states; “The Simple View stresses the importance of both word recognition skills and language comprehension skills”. Therefore, both sets of processes are necessary for reading, but neither is sufficient on its own. This is because learners who cannot adequately recognise the words on the page are by that fact alone prevented from fully understanding the text; whilst readers who can decode the words but do not have the linguistic comprehensions skills to make meaning of those words are also prevented from understanding the read text (Stuart, et al., 2009; Kirby & Savage, 2008).

Savage, (2006) study on struggling readers revealed that oral proficiency made a small but unique contribution to reading comprehension beyond reading fluency and listening comprehension. Similarly, Cutting, & Scarborough, (2006) research revealed that oral language proficiency of beginners up to the tenth grade, also contributed to reading comprehension beyond decoding while the focal point is on the specific reading comprehension measure employed. The implication of these findings is that in addition to receptive measures of comprehension, expressive features of oral proficiency may be an important aspect to include in the SVR. Therefore, in the context of young readers in Botswana, learning to read English as a second language is important to acknowledge that decoding alone might be insufficient: readers might have good decoding skills but still be unable to comprehend the text that is read due to vocabulary problems in the language they are learning. In this light, developing learners’ vocabulary to support comprehension while also giving them insights into the English alphabetic code gained from the phonics is vital in learning to read.

The Rose Report's stance on the SVR indicates that the model "has increasingly been adopted by psychologists researching reading development since it was first proposed in 1986" (Rose Report, 2006, p. 78). On the other hand, Harrison, (2010, p. 208) noted that the SVR "has also been roundly attacked by other psychologists". Furthermore, Harrison (2010, p. 207) concluded that the SVR is a well-designed and convincing model, which is also "partly correct, but dangerously over-simple, with shortcomings as well as some merits" hence the debates.

### **3.2.7 Reading as a constructivist process**

Basic research on learning and thinking were very important during the 1980's, which became the basis for a constructivist view of reading, that is, reading is an active process of building meaning (Fresch, 2008). Reading is a highly constructive process of meaning making which requires the reader to constantly revise the text one is constructing in memory. Therefore, learners build schemata based upon both psychological and social experiences (Turner, 1995). Constructivism as a theory of learning focuses on the learner's needs to make sense of new information and Dewey approached it from a philosophical standpoint, Piaget from a biological, and Vygotsky from a social perspective (Fresch, 2008). Collectively, they emphasize the importance of looking at what the learner brings to a new experience and what the prior experience contains.

Constructivism involves an increasing understanding of the role of background knowledge to construct meaning when reading (Fresch, 2008). Fresch, (2008) is of the opinion that "constructivism helped professionals realize the importance of using background knowledge and strategy deployment when constructing ... word knowledge" (p.43). Therefore, the constructivist view of reading has many implications for language teachers. There is a need to stop teaching reading by simply practising it but to focus on assisting learners to extend their capacity to read constructively across the curriculum. In the classroom, the constructivist view of learning can point towards a number of different teaching practices. In the most general sense, it usually means encouraging learners to use active techniques to create more knowledge and then to reflect on and talk about what they are doing and how their understanding is changing (Turner, 1995; Fresch, 2008). Therefore, constructivist teachers encourage learners to constantly assess how the activity is helping them gain understanding (Fresch, 2008).

In the constructivist classroom, the teacher's role is to prompt and facilitate discussion and furthermore, supports learners in constructivist learning environments through modelling, scaffolding and coaching (Turner, 1995; Fresch, 2008). Because all learning is filtered through pre-existing schema, constructivists suggest that learning is more effective when a learner is actively engaged in the learning process rather than attempting to receive knowledge passively. Arguably, then, a constructivist approach to the teaching of reading requires a more child-centred orientation to the classroom. However, Soler (2007, p. 50), argues that in England the Rose Report (2006) with its emphasis is on systematic phonics "indicates the extent to which we have moved away from the dominant 1960s and 1970s child-centred ideas toward a technicist/rationalist notion of learning". Studies by Fuller et al. (1994), and Tabulawa, (1998) reported that teaching in Botswana classes tends to be teacher-centred because the teacher is seen to be instructing the learners. Similarly, the study carried by Ntoi & Lefoka, (2002) in Lesotho reported teacher-centred style in classes.

Constructivists see reading as a social practice which affects when you read, what you read, where you read, who you read with, and of course why and how you read. Interacting with text can involve practices as diverse as reading instructions, scanning a magazine or reading an academic article. So when teachers are designing curricula for reading in L2 classes, they need to ask themselves what their learners need to do in terms of social practice.

### **3.2.8 Reading as a social process**

Similar to constructivism, social theory explains that learners extract meaning from texts based on their cultural and social backgrounds (Guthrie, Schafer, Wang & Afflerbach, 1995). The primary focus is learning to read through socialization because social interactions and participating in groups play a key role in developing learners' reading competence and verbal communication. Therefore, social factors that include the materials, purposes and circumstances of reading in general and social context including instructional processes within the classroom are very vital in the teaching of reading. As learners relate to the same text in different ways, reading and discussing in groups, pairs, and literature circles is very important as learners can

share their unique perspective of the text (Turner, 1995). For young readers in particular, learning to read is as much about learning what texts can do as it is about learning what words on a page say.

Baynham, (1995) & Oakhill & Beard, (1999)) are of the notion that reading in a native or foreign language is a socio-cultural phenomenon, which is derived from the idea that reading is not an isolated skill, but is necessarily related to the purposes of reading that will be put in a particular social and cultural context of the learner. Soler & Openshaw, (2006) maintain “that reading practices and the teaching of reading arise from social activity, which is in turn shaped by historical, social and political contexts” (p. 4). Therefore, reading development and the teaching of reading needs to acknowledge the undoubted contributions of language, motivation, cultural and political factors.

The key new emphases, thus, which have surfaced over the past decade have been a clearer understanding of the skills which readers need to have mastered and a strong emphasis on the socio-cultural nature of reading: reading is not simply active, but interactive, and located in a cultural and social context (Oakhill & Beard, 1999).

### **3.3 The phonics instruction controversy**

The different theoretical models of reading outlined above play out in practice in very different ways and give rise to a highly contested debate about the most effective pedagogic approach to the teaching of reading. This debate is located principally around differing perspectives on the value and role of ‘phonics instruction’ (Wyse, & Styles, 2007; Hall, 2007). The term ‘phonics instruction’ refers to a method of teaching learners to read by learning the sound-symbol relationships between phonemes and graphemes in order to decode words (Hall, 2007). Learners are systematically taught the full set of phonemes in English and learn how to blend sounds together to read a word. In essence, it is a bottom-up model of reading, which contrasts with the top-down approach of whole language methods. Whole language approaches place more emphasis on the whole text and on reading for meaning: learners are encouraged to read high-quality texts for authentic purposes (Dombey, 2009). Those in favour of whole language

approaches maintained that there is “insufficient recognition of the complexity of linguistic competence and the reader’s expectation of text, while those in favour of the phonics instruction, saw insufficient detail about the processes involved in decoding” (Dombey, 2009, p. 2). Thus, phonics has become a particularly controversial topic in both policy and reading pedagogy, particularly in England and the United States because of these “competing claims about the best ways to teaching reading in the early years” (Drummond & Styles, 2007, p. 35).

Research into the effectiveness of phonics teaching is inconclusive. Chall, (1967) found that phonics instruction helped students to learn at a faster rate than those not given phonics instruction, and Stanovich & West, (1989) argued that phonic knowledge affects decoding ability positively. According to Ellis, (2009), the Clackmannanshire report in Scotland (Johnstone & Watson, 2005) claimed significant gains in word reading scores following systematic phonics instruction. Several studies suggest a relationship between decoding ability and future success as a reader: Carnine, Carnine & Gertsen, (1984) found that poor readers are weak decoders; Lundberg, (1984) & Stanovich, (1994) argued that the ability to sound out words is a strong predictor of future growth in reading; Lesgold & Resnick, (1982) found a positive relationship between effective decoding ability early on and later comprehension. A recent systematic review of the literature research on the use of phonics instruction in the teaching of reading and spelling by Torgerson, Brooks, & Hall, (2006) updated the reviews conducted in previous years (eg. Ehri, Nunes, Stahl & Willows, 2001; Camilli, Wolfe, & Smith, 2006). The conclusion of Torgerson et al., (2006)’s review was that phonics instruction works, but only for accuracy because it does not help children to understand text which is crucial in learning to read.

This partial efficacy of phonics is frequently noted. Adams, (1994) research argues that phonics instruction is essential and effective in teaching learners the alphabetic code in English because it builds skills in decoding unknown words at an early stage of reading instruction. However, Adams, (1994) also argued that although teaching phonics is an essential element in reading instruction, it is not sufficient in itself as it does not significantly address learners’ understanding of text and the development of comprehension strategies. The Clackmannanshire Report (Johnstone & Watson, 2005) offers stronger evidence for the effect of phonics instruction on

word reading than on reading comprehension, and the empirical basis of their claims are contested by Wyse, (2007). The complex orthography of English may also limit the effectiveness of phonics (Hall, 2007). Dombey, (2009) notes the research of Seymour, Aro, & Erskine, (2003) who conducted a study in 14 European countries to cross check the sufficiency of synthetic phonics. The study involved “tests of the grapheme-phoneme recording skills of children in their first year of reading instruction with languages of different degrees of complexity and orthographies of different degrees of transparency” (Dombey, 2009, p. 4). Their findings revealed that:

*“... the complexity of English syllable structure and the opacity of English spelling mean that children learning to read in English take longer to learn to decode apparently simple words, such as ‘dog’ and ‘cat’. They also have to contend with such words such as ‘through’ and ‘once’” (Dombey, 2009, p. 4).*

More recently, neuroscience research is providing further evidence which acts as a pointer to the importance of phonological awareness beyond the phoneme-grapheme level addressed by phonics instruction. Ziegler & Goswami, (2005) underline the importance of larger phonological chunks, and the need to recognise onset and rimes. Ellis, (2007) notes the research of Stuart, (2006) who argues for the synthetic phonics where learners are taught to synthesize individual letter-sound correspondences during early intervention stage, avoiding distractions such as rhyme. Goswami’s work (Hruby, & Goswami, 2011; Thomson, & Goswami, 2010) also indicate the role of other forms of phonological discrimination, such as rhyme and rise time of phonemes, particularly in children with reading difficulties.

The arguments about phonics teaching, however, are not confined to the academy. There is a history of significant policy engagement with the debate, not just in England but in other Anglophone countries too. In the United States, the National Research Council, (1998) re-examined how best to teach reading and concluded that phonics instruction must be systematic and explicit. Two years later, the National Reading Panel, (2000) examined quantitative research

studies on many areas of reading instruction, including phonics and whole language methods and also reported that phonics instruction is an effective method of teaching early reading skills. In Australia, a report on teaching reading commissioned by the Department of Education, Science and Training, reviewed research on reading and determined that ‘where there is unsystematic or no phonics instruction, children’s literacy progress is significantly impeded, inhibiting their initial and subsequent growth in reading accuracy, fluency, writing, spelling and comprehension’ (DEST, 2005, p. 12). In England, the Rose Report (2006), commissioned by the government also came to similar conclusions. Rose, (2006) notes the ‘uncertainties in research findings’, but nonetheless recommends that ‘the systematic approach, which is generally understood as ‘synthetic’ phonics, offers the vast majority of young children the best and most direct route to becoming skilled readers and writers ‘ (Rose, 2006, p. 4). Rose, (2006) does also acknowledge that reading is more than decoding and that phonics instruction ‘is therefore a necessary but not sufficient part of the wider knowledge, skills and understanding which children need to become skilled readers and writers, capable of comprehending and composing text’ (p. 4). However, the recommendations of the report have been realised at policy level as a major endorsement of the phonics method.

Critics of these government reports draw attention to the selective use of evidence (Wyse, 2007), which is politically motivated because:

*“the emphasis in the Rose Report upon a faithful adherence to a specific method and explicit structure of ‘systematic phonic work’ can be seen as the latest stage in an evolving, political driven process that has led to the domination of phonics-based approaches to early reading in English primary schools” (Soler & Openshaw, 2009, p. 172).*

What is evident from both the review of the theoretical literature on how we learn to read and the debate about an appropriate pedagogy for the teaching of reading is that there remains no consensus on the most effective way to teach reading.



### **3.4 Theoretical thinking on comprehension**

Comprehension is defined as intentional thinking during which meaning is constructed through interactions between text and reader (Cain, 2010). Thus, readers derive meaning from text when they engage in intentional, problem solving thinking processes (NRP, 2000). The study carried out by Bernhardt, (1983) revealed that comprehension of passages read silently is higher than that of the passages read aloud. Therefore, researchers working in the area of reading comprehension have shown repeatedly that meaning does not exist only in text because the central strategy is active engagement with the intention of understanding the read text (Cain, 2010; Kirby & Savage, 2008; Stuart, et al. 2009). Thus, comprehension monitoring, question asking, question answering, summarization, and others are very crucial in teaching/learning to read with comprehension (Cain, 2010). However, there are limitations that can be imposed by linguistic abilities, relevant knowledge, and general intelligence (NRP, 2000).

Cain, Oakhill & Lemmon, (2009) state: “vocabulary knowledge not only predicts reading comprehension level, it is also a good predictor of verbal IQ” (p. 53). The result of the study by Cain, et al., (2009) investigating “whether skilled and less skilled comprehenders differ in their ability to infer the meanings of novel vocabulary items from context” (p. 55) indicated that learners who had “weak reading comprehension skills were less able to infer the meanings of novel vocabulary items from context than were their skilled peers” (p. 59). This is an indication that vocabulary knowledge is important in reading comprehension. Therefore, Grabe & Stoller, (2002, p. 51) assert; “...L2 readers need to know enough L2 knowledge (vocabulary and structure) so that L1 reading strategies and skills can be used efficiently and effectively to help comprehend the L2 text”.

In this light, Laufer, (1997) argues that “no text comprehension is possible, either in one’s native language or in a foreign language, without understanding the text’s vocabulary” (p. 20). Moreover, Laufer, (1997) does acknowledge that understanding the vocabulary is not the same as understanding the reading and that is not the only influence on learning to read. This is because elements such as “...restricted background knowledge, interference from L1, limited proficiency in L2 and L1 reading proficiency all might contribute to such differences”

(Verhoeven, 2000, pgs. 313-314). In this view, pre-reading activities play an important role in comprehension especially in ESL teaching. This is because pre-reading activities rely mostly on clarifying the meaning of difficult words or complex structures (Parviz, 2003). Consequently, “psychological research into reading comprehension can inform both the teaching and testing of reading comprehension” (Cain, 2010, p. 84). In this light, reading comprehension is one of the main purposes of ESL teaching/learning as learners read across the curriculum. Therefore, teacher should educate learners about comprehension fostering skills in order to promote their comprehension development (Parviz, 2003; Cain, 2010).

### **3.5 Social factors which influence reading development**

When considering how children learn to read, it is also important to acknowledge the substantial research base which signals the influence of a range of social factors upon children’s development as readers.

#### **3.5.1 Socioeconomic status**

Socio-economic status is seen to provide an advantage or disadvantage to learners in terms of the value placed on reading achievement and resources that support literacy available in the home (Kirsch, et al., 2002). Therefore, a child who grows up in a home where reading is supported, viewed as important, and where reading material is available may often develop stronger reading skills as well as a love for reading than a child from the opposite environment. According to Clark & Foster, 2005, p. 59) “there is some suggestion in the research literature that children from deprived backgrounds do not enjoy reading as much as children from more privileged strata”. This indicates that the way children develop reading practices are influenced by their home and culture and if a child is engaged in reading more at home, this will transmit to success in reading, or at the very least, will have a minimizing effect on the challenges within reading (Smith & Barrett, 2010).

In many cases, parents who establish reading and studying with their children, who show a love of reading themselves, and create time for reading at home are more likely to stimulate their children’s interest in reading. In the UK, there has long been a negative link between achievement and enjoyment of reading, and receiving free school meals. Research carried by

Clark & Foster, (2005, p. 59) “shows that a significantly higher proportion of pupils receiving free school meals (FSM pupils) stated that they do not enjoy reading at all compared to pupils who do not received free meals”. Therefore, children with free school meals in UK tend to enjoy reading less and score less well in reading tests (Kirsch, et al., 2002; Clark & Foster, 2005; Twist et al., 2003; 2007). Those receiving free school meals and having supplementary books at home “reported greater enjoyment of reading than their peers in receipt of free school meals but without books (Clark & Foster, 2005, p. 52). In general, free school meals in a western context is seen to act as a proxy for socio-economic deprivation, but rarely relates strictly to nutritional deprivation. In contrast, in Africa, many children do experience varying degrees of malnutrition. Smith & Barrett’s analysis (2010, p. 14) of primary pupils’ reading achievement in Southern and East Africa highlights that “pupils living by themselves so that they may attend school are, on average, most vulnerable to a lowering of reading score”. In the African context, not only would not living with parents mean less opportunity for sharing books together, but it might also mean that learners were not having sufficient nutritional input, both of which might influence reading achievement. Moreover,

*“Botswanan pupils were most likely to receive fewer than three meals per day, some 46% of all pupils, and nearly 20% of pupils receive fewer than two meals per day. Those receiving fewer than two meals per day, on average, attained scores 36% points lower than those on three meals per day” (Smith & Barrett, 2010, p. 15).*

This is an indication that in Botswana, in contrast to the UK, learners receiving free school meals may be more likely to engage in reading because the free meals are addressing a nutritional deficit.

A household survey in rural areas undertaken by Fuller, Hua and Snyder, (1994) indicate that, “mothers’ literacy levels and reading practices in rural areas were highly related to their daughters’ level of school attainment” (p. 356). Other studies have revealed that girls’ performance in reading proficiency out performs boys, due to the fact that they are always close

to their mothers (Milon, 1989). Moreover, when considering the girls' higher performance on reading literacy assessment, "it is not surprising to note that on average internationally, girls scored significantly more highly than boys in reading for both literary and informational purposes" (Twist, Schagen, & Hodgson, 2007, p. 22). Therefore, this is an indication that Botswana is not the only country in which girls out performs boys in reading because "International comparative studies, such as the OECD Reading for Change study (2002) or PIRLS (Twist et al., 2003), show that girls tend to outperform boys on literacy tasks in most countries" (Clark & Foster, 2005, p. 27).

Reading practices that increase enjoyment and success in reading can play an important role in reducing the gap between the reading proficiency scores of learners from different socio-economic backgrounds. This might even have a role to play in reducing the gap reported in reading proficiency between males and females (Kirsch, et al., 2002; OECD, 2002; Twist et al., 2003).

### **3.5.2 Absence of books in the home**

Children who come from an environment where there are books and their parents have time to read, find pleasure in reading because of the reading spirit they have acquired at home (Stewig, 1982). Davis (1987) found that the availability of modern amenities and books at home have an effect on students' performance in Botswana. They also find reading motivating especially because they do not only read their textbooks but also have access to varied reading material. Twist, Schagen & Hodgson, (2006, p. 50), note that "children in England reported having among the most books at home and there was a clear association between number of books in the home and reading attainment". On the other hand there are cases where some of the learners have not experienced a book-rich environment and reading is not practised thus not facilitating reading literacy.

Obviously, all these children need to be handled differently as far as the teaching of reading is concerned and individualized methods should be used to cater for their needs. Furthermore, "there is ample evidence that children who grow up in book-rich environment become readers" (Stewig, 1982, p. 154). This coincides with the analysis carried out by Smith & Barrett, (2010, p.

15) that yielded a similar finding as “a pupil with an access to one to ten books, 11 to 50 or over 50 books in home attained, on average, 4, 9 and 14 points more in reading than a pupil without books to hand in the home environment” in Southern and East Africa Primary schools including Botswana. In Botswana, criticism of the shortage of reading books is not only from researchers but even from media as Mmegi, Editor, (2006) reports that;

*“primary schools are facing a severe shortage of textbooks once again reflects how neglected this sector of our education system is. While education experts argue that the early years are the most important to a child’s education, our country continues to treat this sector with disdain”.*

The above assertion is an indication that books are a very important factor when we talk of quality education in the world. The report is complemented by the findings of the research study in Kenya that revealed that “pupils who had most learning materials were estimated to achieve better than those who had hardly any learning materials (Onsomu, Kosimbei & Ngware, (2006, p.19). Therefore, a child who grows up in a home where reading is supported, viewed as important, and where reading materials are available may often develop stronger reading skills as well as a love for reading than a child from the opposite environment (Clark & Foster, 2005; Allington, McGill-Franzen, Cammilli, Williams, Graf, Zeig, Zmach & Nowak, 2010; Smith & Barrett, 2010).

### **3.5.3 Value of school libraries**

Studies have shown that there is a general consensus among teachers that the library occupies a central role in English reading instruction (Clark & Foster, 2005; Allington, et al., 2010; Clark, 2010; OECD, 2010; Francis, Lance, & Lietzau, 2010). Accordingly, learners should be exposed to library skills to enable them to acquire and develop their reading abilities.

The library provides learners with unique opportunities to read a variety of books that will expose them to various reading skills (Clark & Foster, 2005; Twist et al. 2006; Allington et al. 2010; OECD, 2002; 2010; Francis et al. 2010). Clark’s (2010, p. 4) findings from her research

study linking school libraries and literacy suggest that learners use the school library “because it gives them easy access to books, because it is a friendly space and because they believe that the school library, and by default reading, will help them do better at school”. Therefore, as they interact with the different reading materials and with their teacher as well as with their classmates, they will gradually reinforce their knowledge and reading skills. Clark’s study (2010) revealed that “young people who use the library tend to hold more positive attitudes towards reading than young people who do not use it” (p. 14). Young learners who participated in the research study felt that they find most of the information that they want from the school library, thus helping them to understand their school work. This is an indication that if the learners’ are exposed to various literary materials, then it will give them a broader perspective on why they are reading, so that they do not always see reading in isolation from other subjects. According to Twist et al. (2010, p. 69) “over three-quarters of pupils (77 per cent) in England make regular, at least weekly, use of the classroom library which is considerably higher than the international average (59 per cent)”. However, it seems that there is a difference in learners’ ethnic background because “young people from Asian backgrounds use the school library more than young people from White, Mixed or Black backgrounds” (Clark, 2010, p. 4).

The study conducted by Adenyinka & Samson, (2007) revealed that shortage of libraries and lack of reading resources act as a contributing factor to learners not having good reading habits in Botswana Primary schools. Therefore, school libraries have a powerful force in the lives of learners, and as teachers, we can take advantage of this by shaping our curriculum by teaching them about the value of school and public libraries. The richness and diversity of using the library typifies literature for children thus, meaning that teachers, parents, and children have a wealth of books from which to select during reading. Whenever possible, teachers should try to involve children in the process of selecting, obtaining and arranging books for the reading centres because they would learn that books could be classified by genre and author. Furthermore, they would be motivated to read knowing that they selected the books.

### **3.5.4 Links between enjoyment of reading and success in reading**

What I have noticed in my own professional experience is that learners' read books based on curriculum subjects because they seem to be focusing on the tests and examinations. In other words, the test-crazed school environments are certainly affecting reading because learners focus more on reading for curriculum subjects rather than for enjoyment. Geske & Ozola, (2008, p. 71) analyzed data from IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) & PIRLS (2001) and concluded that "students high achieving in reading literacy usually like reading for their own enjoyment and come from families where parents spend a lot of time on reading". Therefore, children learn to love reading by being read to at home and at school. If parents do not offer a literate environment where learners can have access to books and where reading is perceived as enjoyable children will suffer by not enjoying reading that seems to lead to success in reading (OECD, 2002; 2010; Francis, et al. 2010). If a child does not see parents and older siblings in the home and teachers valuing reading, it can influence the child to disparage reading as something to be endured rather than enjoyed.

In this light, teachers need to make sure that learners are helped even at home level to derive pleasure from the experience of reading. Therefore, it is important to make sure that "as we teach children to read, a simple equation does not obscure the need for attention to such matters as enjoyment, engagement and perseverance" (Seymour, et al. 2003, p. 11).

### **3.6 The relationship between L1 and L2 reading**

In addressing the context of the study proposed here, the teaching of reading in Botswana, it is necessary to be mindful that these readers are learning to read in a second language. The renewed interest of reading in English as a Second Language (ESL) / English as Foreign Language (EFL) can be traced to several sources as it is a particular concern in the world. This is because at every grade level, reading scores are highly predictive of educational achievement in the grades that follow (Kern 2000; Fisher, Brooks & Lewis, 2002). In Botswana, almost all the textbooks for curriculum subjects are written in English (Adenyinka & Samson, 2007), requiring good L2 reading skills.

Traditionally, studies in language teaching and learning have treated reading and writing as separate individual skills and almost self-evidently examined the practices of foreign languages and L1 separately (McCormick & Donato, 2000; Grabe, 2009). In this research study, a more social and holistic view of the teaching of reading is viewed as literacy and is seen as a transferable ability to master the textual worlds in varying forms and contexts both in L1 and L2. Literacy is thus interpreted as a social practice, something people do with various texts to participate in the meaning making in social communities. Literacy practices include the construction of knowledge, values, attitudes, beliefs and feelings associated with the reading and writing of particular texts within particular contexts (Baynham, 1995; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Hall, 2002; The Centre for Literacy of Quebec, 2008).

There is a debate on whether ESL literacy learners are more successful if they learn to read confidently in the first language first, or whether they should learn to read simultaneously in both L1 and L2 (Barton & Pitt, 2003; Schroeder, 2005). Research studies have also indicated that the use of learners' L1 in the classroom for clarification of conceptual or for the giving of instructions is often cited as a positive measure because if instructions are given to learners in the native tongue, learners are able to focus on the task, and not be stressed over whether or not they have understood the instructions correctly (The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2000; Barton & Pitt, 2003; Schroeder, 2005).

With specific focus on the use of L1 in clarification on conceptual work, Schroeder, (2005) observes that it is of utmost importance because it aids in understanding the instruction before, during and after reading. It facilitates learners' development of concepts that enable them to easily acquire knowledge in second or third language and to further expose them to cultures of their communities. Schroeder (2005) further argues that L1 is a language a learner needs to rely on as an emergent reader in the first grade although literacy proficiency in English is the ultimate goal. Furthermore, Barton and Pitt, (2003) note favourable outcomes when teaching first language literacy, but also quote Bell's (1995) research paper where, based on the author's experience of learning L2, he disputes the global belief that:



*“Learners who are literate in their native language generally make better progress than those without native language literacy... The relationship between first and second literacies is highly complex, so that not all aspects of the L1 will necessarily aid the development of L2” (pgs. 687-688).*

In support of the above dispute, Ediger, (2001) also cautions that L1 reading skills do not readily transfer to the development of L2. Therefore, studies have noted both the potential and the difficulties because it depends on what the first language is and Bell, (1995) suggests that literacy in one language or culture cannot necessarily be assumed to be helpful in developing literacy in another. Some of the case studies presented by Millar, (2008, p. 106) also illustrate “...the complexity of helping students to use their analysis of their mother tongue to learn English”. This might be because when the orthography of the L1 is different from that of L2 there is an added layer of complexity in the learning experience. In fact, varied teaching and learning practices and interactions rather than passivity of learners is “required to accommodate different learner backgrounds, interests, learning styles and literacy levels” (The centre for Literacy, 2008: p. 5). This is supported by The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, (2000: p. Xii):

*“Many ESL Literacy learners prefer “experiential” learning and so the connection to real life is both content and skills developed in the classroom is important. As much as possible, think about the real-life applications of any skills you plan to cover”.*

The construction of meaning depends on the reader’s knowledge of the subject read and a broad-based background or world knowledge (Yusuf, 2011). This is an indication that teachers need to connect the taught concepts to the learners’ real life experiences in order for them to understand concepts. This might require teachers to resort to explaining concepts in L1. Therefore, “teaching reading in a foreign language should be based on a literacy framework that takes linguistic, cognitive, and socio-cultural domains into account” (Kern, 2000, p. 167).

### **3.7 From the literature review to the present study**

This review of the literature on the teaching of reading, signals that it is a contested domain, represented by very different perspectives. In Botswana, the context for this study is that the national policy has endorsed the introduction of phonics instruction as a key element of L2 reading (Republic of Botswana, 1977; 2002; Botswana Lower Primary Syllabus, 2010). This lead to an evaluative conclusions on Breakthrough to Setswana literacy programme found in Peacock & Morakaladi, (1995), that points out that the Breakthrough manual in Botswana stresses “that Breakthrough is followed in standard 2 by Bridge to English which uses the skills taught in Breakthrough as the foundation for learning English” (p. 407). However, the recommendation has not been put into practice in standard 2 classes and this shows lack of continuity as intended in the manual; hence, the concerned teachers initiative in implementing English Project that introduces the phonics instruction which might be similar to Bridge to English. Policy documentation states that the “the ultimate goal of any instruction in phonics is to enable learners to apply various phonics generalizations during reading and writing” (Botswana Lower Primary Syllabus, 2010, p. 36). Nevertheless, the use of phonics as an instructional method is still in its infancy in Botswana. Potentially, the confident implementation of Botswana policy could lead to significant improvement in levels of L2 reading attainment in the country. At the same time, it is clear that policy mandates in Botswana take little account of more social processes involved in becoming a reader.

Researchers like Wray, Medwell, Fox & Poulson (1999) have argued that in the debate on how best to teach reading, the actual behaviour used by teachers’ risk being neglected. The initiative of the teacher in the class determines whether the learners will succeed or fail in gaining knowledge of the basic reading skills (Rose Report, 2006). Block, Hurt and Oakar (2002) make the argument that teaching abilities might have a greater impact on pupil attainment than specific programmes. The discourses surrounding the teaching of reading, as described above, focus heavily on methods and teaching strategies, but pay relatively little attention to teaching thinking and actual pedagogical practices.

Drawing from the NRP, (2000)'s recommendation that both pre-service and in-service teachers need further education about effective reading instruction in early reading seems to be essential in line with the phonic approach. Knowing that all phonics programs are not the same brings with it the implication that teachers must be educated about how to evaluate those different programs suitable to their countries. This is to determine which ones are based on strong evidence and how they can most effectively use these programs in their own classrooms. The research study conducted by N'Namdi, (2005) in United States revealed that teachers who supplemented explicit phonics instruction with coaching and where learners are taught strategies of applying phonics to everyday reading made the greatest growth in reading. It is therefore important that teachers be provided with evidence-based pre-service training and on-going in-service training to implement the most appropriate phonics instruction effectively. In analysing a set of case studies from across Canada, it was found that teachers who are mostly successful are those who have been trained and having experience in the language taught (Millar (2008). Therefore, drawing from what Onsomu et al., (2006), noted in their research in Kenya:

*“Teachers’ competency in subject matter has positive impact on performance in reading .... Emerging policy implications include need to put more emphasis on the professional development of teachers in ... reading; and enhancing reading skills for both teachers and students”*  
(p. 3).

The recommendation has been complemented by POSTnote, (2009) by indicating that an Ofsted inspection of 2008 recommended that: “all trainee teachers should observe good teaching and assessment of reading and phonics, and have their practice in these areas assessed” (p. 3). Therefore, availability of resources and trained teachers that support the teaching of phonics in L2 seems to be important internationally. However, this might be problematic for teachers in Botswana in the sense that, few teachers in the schools that have implemented English project attend school based workshops that expose them to skills on how to teach phonics approach. In this case, not all schools benefit from this in-service training thus, making their work difficult.

In this light, researchers like Wray, et al., (1999) have argued that in the debate on how best to teach reading, the actual behaviour used by teachers risk being neglected. The initiative of the teacher in the class ascertains whether the learners will succeed or fail in gaining knowledge of the basic reading skills (Rose Report, 2006). This coincides with the argument that teaching abilities might have a greater impact on pupil attainment than specific programmes (Block, et al. (2002). According to Ellis, (2007, p 46), the Clackmannanshire success

*“was undoubtedly a well-designed intervention and the design features fit with a lot of what we now know about successful staff development and curriculum reform: it had an authentic beginning and systematically build ideological commitment in the key staff”.*

Therefore, the teachers play a major role in the success or failure of the learners’ education.

### **3.8 Reading pedagogy**

To teach L2 reading well, teachers need to know as much as possible about reading pedagogy and how to integrate that knowledge effectively in the classroom. As Adenyinka & Samson, (2007) put it, our assumptions as teachers do matter. If we are to guide and direct our learners, we need to know where we are going especially with the teaching strategies that are most likely to develop the reading comprehension and those not worthwhile. Therefore, teachers must be cognizant of their underlying beliefs and theories of literacy development especially how children begin to learn to read and how they develop from that point into an increasingly effective reader with a broadening range of texts (Byrne, 2002). They should be holding beliefs that are grounded in experience, information and have knowledge on how this literacy development is affected by the knowledge, experiences, and cognitive stage of children reading in L2 (Aebersold, & Field, 1997).

The styles and methods of instruction used in the teaching of reading are likely to be essential in developing learners who can read confidently across the curriculum. Research conducted by Hall & Harding, (2003) on the 4-14 year old learners revealed that effective teachers integrate reading with writing and link their teaching with other curriculum areas. Moreover, Pressley et al.’s

(2001) findings revealed that teachers who are considered outstanding balance skill instruction with real reading and writing when teaching learners who are in the first year of primary education. In most cases, teachers might rather be flexible, and adapt the methods they utilise to the needs of each situation they face in the classroom in order to cater for learners' individual differences. In this perspective, teachers are clearly aware of the complex nature of reading and have this concern to the forefront when planning how they might teach each new concept. Many primary school teachers want to adopt a balanced approach by drawing on all of the teaching methods at different times (Flynn & Stainthorp, 2006).

Taylor, Pearson, Clark & Walpole (2000) found from their observation study that more accomplished primary school teachers engaged in more small groups than whole class teaching. This is complemented by Onsomu et al., (2006, p. 19) in their findings that “under the school level model, schools with smaller pupils-teacher ratios were estimated to perform better than schools with larger pupil-teacher ratios”. Taylor et al. (2000) also found in their study that skilled teachers elicited higher levels of pupil engagement, preferred coaching to telling when interacting with pupils, and involved pupils in more high level thinking related to reading. In their case, learners are not passive but actively engaged in the lesson which in Botswana; learners are observed to be passive in most cases as the teaching of reading is done to the whole class or to a group of learners (Adenyinka & Samson, 2007). This is an indication that learners individual differences are not taken into consideration and those having reading difficulties will not receive the attention they should be accorded in reading. In this light, guided reading instruction takes the stress off the learners who have reading difficulties and therefore, "the ultimate goal is to foster independent readers, and guided reading is a means to this end rather than the end itself" (Ford & Opitz, 2001, p. 2). Therefore, any part of the literacy skills that break down impacts on the teaching and learning to read (NRP, 2000; Hammond & Macken-Horarik, 2001; Topping & Ferguson, 2005).

The controversies of reading pedagogy provides ways of thinking about the complexities of literacy pedagogy that go far beyond the traditional basics of word recognition, spelling, comprehension, fluency and other reading skills that are given much priority in the teaching and

learning to read. Such work suggests that, while foundational competencies are indeed crucial to the successful literacy development of each individual, they are only part of any effective literacy program. This concurs with the studies of Taylor, Peterson, Pearson & Rodriguez, (2002) which found out that teacher telling of information had a significant negative relationship with phonemic awareness, concepts of print, fluency and comprehension growth. Conversely, achievement growth was associated with pupil activity rather than being passive, which is associated with child-centred approaches. The research studies with regard to teaching strategies adopted by teachers in Kenya, Botswana, Nigeria and Malawi revealed that there is consistency “in showing the dominance of “didactic” forms of teaching emphasising transmission from teacher to pupil” (Moloi, Morobe & Urwick, 2008, p. 613). From this study, one could conclude that teacher centred method still dominates in teaching. The study carried by Arthur, (1998) in Botswana Primary Schools revealed that “teachers avoid challenges, for example in the form of pupil questions, which they may not be able to respond to” (p. 10). Therefore, higher levels of questioning have a significant positive relationship to comprehension growth because learners are engaged in literacy development (Topping & Ferguson, 2005; Taylor, et al. 2002; Hammond & Macken-Horarik, 2001). Surprisingly, higher level of questioning seems to be lacking in Botswana primary schools despite the many claims about what the teachers ought to be doing in the classrooms. According to Onsomu et al., (2006, p. 18); “societal beliefs, which teachers bring to the classroom, also have profound implications on learning achievements” because they want to maintain their own authority. This suggests that to limit literacy pedagogy to such practices is to fail to provide support for the kind of on-going literacy development that learners need in order to meet the increasingly complex demands of literacy in the classroom. In this light, Ford & Opitz, (2001) indicate, "true, guided reading ... is increasingly perceived as an integral part of a balanced reading program designed to help all children become independent readers" (p. xv).

On the other hand, it seems there is very little documented evidence of what is actually going on in schools and of what teachers’ think about literacy education (Tabulawa, 1997; Adenyinka & Samson, 2007; Moloi, et al., 2008). Therefore, this is an indication that there is a lack of research into ESL literacy pedagogy for lower primary schools in Botswana; however, the discussions of effective pedagogical practices that do occur in classrooms emphasis the complex nature of ESL

learning processes. Because of the complexity and the possibility of engaging in these discussions within the context of our own schools, it is important for educators to engage in literacy debates.

### **3.9 Summary**

The discussions on defining and contextualizing literacy in a framework that leads to actions could potentially improve the teaching and learning of reading in L2. This is because schools as institutions have the power to categorise social identities (The Centre for Literacy of Quebec, 2008). These categories are inscribed in cultural models of schooling and constructed through teachers' interactions with learners, but also through curriculum and materials design (Kern, 2000; Hawkins, 2005). In order to function in a knowledgeable society, one has to understand what kind of literacy practices society values and how to show competencies to gain affirmation and recognition of those literacy practices (Rassool, 1999). Therefore, a conceptual framework of this study perceives reading as both a cognitive and a social process. In this light, this study seeks to examine and understand Botswana teachers' pedagogical beliefs and practices related to the teaching of reading. It also seeks to generate new knowledge about teachers thinking about reading in a non-Western cultural context.

Having highlighted what the review reveals on the teaching of reading, the next chapter will provide the research methodology used in the study.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter is devoted to a discussion of the research design and also provides a description and presentation of the methodological procedures which I used to gather information and data of the study. It provides justification and support for the research process itself and the conclusions which are drawn from it later. The research design and methodology entails a number of techniques and methods in investigating the research topic and how they are utilized and analysed. The chapter comprises of the following subsections: an explanation of the chosen research paradigm, the interpretive paradigm and its ontology and epistemology, the research design, the research instruments used in the study, data collection and analysis and the chapter concludes with a discussion of ethical issues pertinent to this research study.

### **4.1 Research Paradigm**

It is important to acknowledge that any research study is located within a particular paradigmatic stance. A paradigm may be defined as the model in education underlying the worldviews guiding the researchers (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998; Guba and Lincoln, 1994) or as “a basic set of beliefs that guide action” (Guba, 1990: 17). Therefore, a paradigm in education is seen as a belief system through which human experience or behaviour may be viewed and is a worldview which is held by those working in the field (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Wellington, 2000). Tashakkori and Teddlie, (1998) suggest that a paradigm is a view of life that directs researchers’ actions, judgements and also determines the individual's view of things. It involves theoretical dimensions or perspectives but also encompassing frameworks and thus, the influence of the paradigm thus permeates all dimensions of an approach (Ernest, 1994; Wellington, 2000). In other words one can refer to a paradigm as a set of interconnected assumptions about the nature of reality. One has to make assumptions about the nature of reality because anything that a researcher might do to test what reality is must be based on some understanding of that reality and their role in educational research (Wellington, 2000). Broadly speaking, in education, two research stances have dominated the scene and become the most popular. These are the positivistic mode of inquiry and the interpretive/ constructivist mode of inquiry (Grix, 2004; Crotty, 2003), each adopting different positions in relation to the nature of truth and reality, and



underpinned by different assumptions. In considering the design of a research study, it is important to recognise that my own ontological and epistemological beliefs influence the methodological choices that I make.

#### **4.2 The interpretive paradigm**

Because this study has adopted a theoretical view of reading as social practice, and maintains that learning to read is a constructivist process, I have chosen to locate my study within the interpretative paradigm. The paradigm's claim that the reality experienced is constructed by the participants in the subject of the inquiry fits with my intention to develop understanding of teachers' beliefs and practices, and of the multiple versions of truth that the enquiry will reveal. Interpretative research is described as naturalistic, constructivist, and qualitative in its approach to educational enquiry (Grix, 2004; Crotty, 2003; Richards, 2003). Lincoln and Guba, (1985) view interpretive research as the same as hermeneutical research because the starting point of inquiry in the interpretive paradigm starts with the ordinary, everyday understanding we have of one another because that is how one can make sense of people's lives, their experiences and how they view the world they live in (Wellington, 2000). It is my aim, through this research, to make sense of the lived experiences of the Botswana teachers in my study. According to Wellington, (2000), the educational "researcher's aim is to explore perspectives and shared meanings and to develop insights into situations, e.g. schools, classrooms" (p. 16).

The focus of this research is finding out teachers' pedagogical knowledge of how to teach reading and how this is realized in practice. The interpretive paradigm (Richards, 2003) adopts the perspective that knowledge is created through interaction between the world and the individual. Thus, in this study are the teachers, and the learners that they teach and the social context of the classrooms and communities they inhabit. One of the most relevant reasons for choosing the interpretive approach is due to the belief I hold regarding research in literacy and teaching. I believe that knowledge is created and socially constructed; and reality is not objectively determined, but socially constructed. Denzin & Lincoln, (1994, pgs. 13-14) are of the view that "the constructive paradigm assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjective epistemology (knower and subject create the understandings), and naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures". In this study, I want to

understand the multiple realities of the teachers' beliefs and practices, and give space to the voices of my participants.

The research study is set in the natural world of a real classroom setting in Botswana, rather than an artificially-constructed laboratory setting. Conducting the study in a naturalistic setting allowed me to be as true as possible to the nature of subjects being studied: the phenomenon studied was not divorced from its natural environment (Bell, 2004; Bryman, 2001; Mertens, 1998). I spent extensive time on site in order to systematically observe, interview and also to record the processes as they evolved naturally in the selected locations. The interpretive paradigm gave me a chance to allow important concepts in the study to evolve as they were constructed by the participants. When studying these Primary School teachers' teaching in attempting to find the strategies that they use when teaching reading, I became a part of the environment being studied (Bell, 2004). I became an active participant in the process of data collection: I used a classroom observation protocol, and I also took shorthand notes during classroom observations, because I wanted to capture extensive data that are truly from the subject's voice and practices.

Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the interpretive stance. For instance, critics point to the problem of representativeness as the design leads to in-depth knowledge only of particular contexts and situations, in this case, particular primary classrooms in Botswana. Unless a large body of knowledge of many situations is developed, it is sometimes difficult to develop more general models (Mertens, 1998) from the very context-bound nature of studies. However, generalisable knowledge is often neither relevant nor meaningful, in which case researchers are better off understanding specific contexts. In this study, I was not seeking to generate generalisable data which could be extended as applicable to all primary contexts: rather, I was seeking for rich-in-depth and illuminatory understanding of this particular context. Such rich understanding might have significance within the national context of Botswana and could potentially lead to a much more widely informed body of knowledge about the teaching of reading to young learners in Botswana.

### **4.3 The generation of qualitative data**

Whilst it is not necessarily true that interpretivist research must use qualitative data, this is nonetheless the most common approach. In this research study I adopt a qualitative method for data collection, through the use of interviews and classroom observation, consistent with a socially-constructed view of reality. Qualitative methodology refers to research which produces non-disruptive data, generally people's own written or spoken words and it allows the researcher to know the participants personally and use them as they are, to experience their daily struggles when confronted with real life situations (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Bell, 2004). As qualitative research is collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data by observing what people do and say, it is much more subjective. The quality of the findings from qualitative research is directly dependent upon the skills, experience and sensitivity of the researcher (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Wiersma & Jurs, 2005).

Bogdan & Biklen, (2003) are of the opinion that qualitative research is the key instrument in studies in natural settings. In my study, the combination of interview and observation data allows for a detailed and comprehensive picture of teachers' beliefs about the teaching of reading and their actual classroom practices. As a qualitative researcher, I seek to understand both the world as it is, and the social world at the level of subjective experience (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Examining how others view a reality and the subjective meaning they apply to that perceived reality requires acknowledging that different individuals will draw different meanings from different experiences.

Qualitative research includes certain assumptions and values regarding their use under specific circumstances and the following diagram illustrates the methodological assumptions underlying the qualitative methodology.

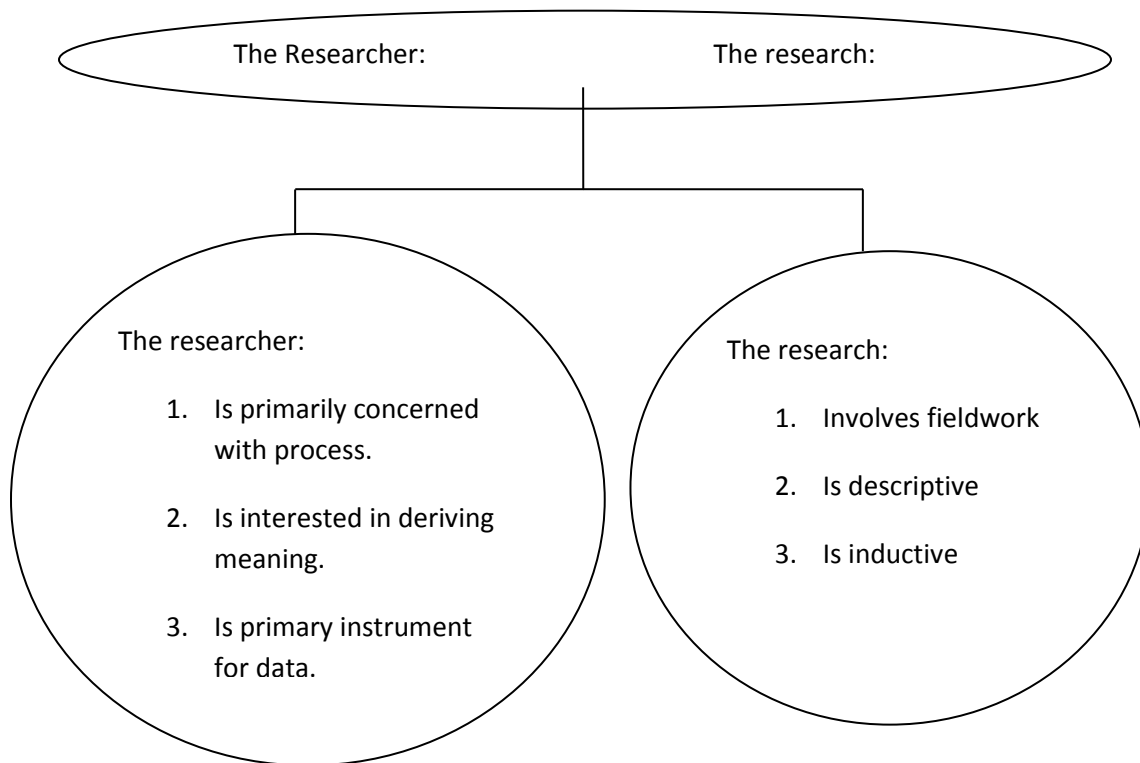


Figure (4.1): Assumptions underlying the qualitative methodology.

#### 4.4.0 Research questions

The following research design and instruments are designed explicitly to address the research questions which were devised to assist the researcher to have a clear focus on the study. The research questions also give the researcher guidance on how to carry out the research study. The following research questions were generated to explore teachers' pedagogical subject knowledge and teaching practices of teaching reading in Botswana Primary Schools. Therefore, the research design adopted was guided by the following research questions:

1. What pedagogical subject knowledge underpins the teaching of reading in lower primary education?
2. What teaching strategies do teachers use to teach early reading in the second language?

#### 4.4.1 Research design

The research methods used to collect data in this research study are based on the principles of qualitative field studies (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Patton, 2001; Mills, 2003). Concurring with this, data collection was conducted using two types of instruments namely; the interview and classroom observation. Table (4.1) represents the framework of the methods followed in this study. The first phase addresses teachers' pedagogical subject knowledge underpinning the teaching of reading in lower primary education and is represented by conducting preliminary semi structured interviews with 10 Primary school teachers from four schools. The second phase addresses the teaching strategies that teachers use when teaching early reading in second language and is represented by classroom observations of 10 teachers from the interview sessions. Following these observations, I conducted stimulated recall interviews, based on the observations captured. Six teachers gave consent to be observed for the second time, thus increasing the number of classroom observations and stimulated recall interviews in phase 2 to 16. The following diagram illustrates the research design of the study.

Research Questions	Data collection	Duration of data collection	Instrument	Sample size	Sample type	Data Analysis
<b>Phase 1</b>						
What pedagogical subject knowledge underpins the teaching of reading in lower primary education?	Interviews with teachers		Semi-structured interview protocol	10 teachers: 1 Preliminary interviews each. Total: 10	Standards 2-4 teachers in urban, semi rural and rural areas.	Qualitative: Content analysis based on emerging themes.
<b>Phase 2</b>						
What teaching strategies do teachers use to teach early reading in second language?	Classroom observation		Classroom observation protocol	10 teachers: 1 observation each for 10 teachers and 2 <sup>nd</sup> observation for 6 teachers. Total: 16	Standards 2-4 teachers in urban, semi rural and rural areas.	Qualitative: Based on matching protocol features with meaningful incidents.

	Interview with teachers		Stimulated recall based on observation	16 Post observation interview each Total: 16	Standards 2-4 teachers in urban, semi rural and rural areas	Qualitative: Content analysis based on emerging themes
		<b>8 Weeks</b>		10 teachers from 4 Primary Schools.		

Table (4.1): Outline of the research design

#### 4.4.2 Sample of the study

The sampling process of the study came in two stages. In the first stage, only schools within reach (60-100 km) were eligible for sampling due to the practical difficulties of travelling over long distances. Therefore, in Gaborone, I selected two schools, while in Kgatleng District I also selected two schools. In Gaborone, one school was chosen because I taught some of the teachers in the Senior Management Team (SMT) and thus had good relationships with the school while the other school was chosen because it was the only school that had adopted Bridge to English (Breakthrough to English). In Kgatleng District, one school was just near my home and it was convenient because I did not have to travel a long distance. The other school in Kgatleng District was far because I had to travel 100 km and it was in a rural area. I felt it was vital in my study to include a school that is in a rural area because my assumption was that the socioeconomic status of learners might have an impact on their educational outcomes. There were thus four schools in my sample. One teacher from each standard 2-4 was selected by the Head of Department for Languages in all the school (Refer to Table 4.2), giving an overall sample of 10 female teachers who participated in the research study. The sample of standards 2-4 participants was chosen because it is the preparatory and critical stage where learning becomes more advanced and difficult as the content of all the subjects except Setswana are taught in English.

Teachers	Schools	Standard taught	School location
Pelo	Gaborone (Primary School 1)	3	Urban area
Metsi	Gaborone (Primary School 1)	2	Urban area
Maru	Gaborone (Primary School 1)	4	Urban area

Peo	Kgatlang District (Primary School 2)	2	Semi-rural area
Thobo	Kgatlang District (Primary School 2)	4	Rural area
Namune	Kgatlang District (Primary School 2)	3	Rural area
Masimo	Kgatlang District (Primary School 3)	3	Semi-rural area
Matlho	Kgatlang District (Primary School 3)	4	Semi -rural area
Masa	Gaborone City (Primary School 4)	2	Urban area
Phetso	Gaborone City (Primary School 4)	2	Urban area

Table (4.2): Sample of the study

## 4.5 Data collection instruments

The main modes of data collection were semi-structured interviews, classroom observation, and stimulated recall, and for each of these a research instrument was designed, as outlined below.

### 4.5.1 The Interviews

The purpose of the interview was to obtain information by actually talking to the participants. Hornby, (1995) views an interview as “an occasion when a person is asked questions by one or more other people” (p. 498). It helped me to collect first-hand information from the interviewees, in this case, the teachers’ pedagogical knowledge and beliefs about the teaching of reading in Botswana Primary schools. The teachers also shed some light on the techniques they employ when teaching reading in second language.

Wellington’s, (2000) view is that the face to face encounter of an interview helps both the interviewer and interviewee to read voice, facial expressions and gestures, which may reveal how strongly the interviewee feels about the questions asked. The main advantage of an interview as a research tool is its flexibility, in particular, the way the interviewer can respond by seeking clarification or elaboration. It is also valuable because the interviewer “can follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feeling, which the questionnaire can never do” (Bell, 1987, p. 135). The result can be fruitful because the interviewer can deduce meaning from the way the response is made by considering non-verbal cues employed by the respondent.

Nevertheless, interviews are time consuming and as it is considered a subjective technique, there may be an element of bias in answering the questions but “...even so, the interview can yield rich material and can often put flesh on the bones of questionnaire responses” (Bell, 1987, p. 135). Cohen, Manion & Keith, (2000) observe that an interview is not merely a data collection exercise; it is also a social encounter.

#### **4.5.1.1 The semi-structured interview**

The semi-structured interview in phase 1 preceded the lesson observation and sought to elicit teachers’ pedagogical beliefs and reported practices in the teaching of reading. In the course of an interview, the responsibility of the interviewer is to ensure that the message from the interviewee retains its meaning when received by the interviewer (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Creswell, (2003) views this subject-subject relationship as communicative rationality focussing on achieving a shared understanding. As part of the approach to the interview, attention was given to the way in which the interview might be designed in order to facilitate in depth discussion. The technique of exploring issues in depth is largely dependent on the skill of the interviewer in pursuing parts of the conversation that are ambiguous or in any way unclear or lacking information (Radnor, 1994; Patton, 2001). This skill is essentially the ability of the interviewer to get the participant to develop initial thoughts and expand them. Pursuing a thought within the interview protects the interviewer from having to make assumptions about the meaning behind a statement. This step in the interview process also requires that the interviewer knows when to drop a line of questioning (Cohen, et al., 2000; Wilkinson, 2000). Over emphasis on an unclear detail makes it easy for the participant to lose sight of the real focus of the interview and so begin to interpret questions in a different context from what was originally established at the onset of the interview (Mills, 2003).

#### **4.5.1.2 Construction of the interview protocol**

The semi-structured interview gave participants the opportunity to verbally express their views but in order to elicit rich, meaningful data, it is important to design the protocol in a way that supports the development of an open dialogue. Using a semi-structured protocol allowed me to maintain a level of focus in the, line of discussion, but also to explore perspectives, truths and unexpected ideas as they arise from the interviews (Mills, 2003).



A semi-structured interview protocol (See Appendix 1) was formulated with the established research questions in mind, and drawing on ideas deriving from the literature review. In designing the interview schedule, I drew on theoretical thinking from the literature review to inform the choice of questions. The first set of questions set out to probe teachers' pedagogical subject knowledge. In this section, teachers were invited to consider what subject knowledge they needed to be effective teachers of reading (Turner, 1995; Aebersold & Field, (1997; Byrne, (2002); Adenyinka & Samson, 2007) and what they thought characterised a good teacher of reading. The questions also probed their pedagogical knowledge of children as learners, trying to elicit if they were aware of the skills learners need to become effective readers (Aebersold & Field, (1997), what they felt characterised a good reader, and their understanding of the problems some readers face in learning to read (Seymour, et al., 2003; Schroeder, 2005).

The second section of the interview probed teachers' pedagogical practices. In this section, teachers were invited to share their views on the role of phonics teaching in lower classes (Chall, 1967; Adams, 1994; The National Reading Panel, 2000; Republic of Botswana, 2002: DEST, 2005; Rose Report, 2006; Botswana Lower Primary Syllabus, 2010). The questions also probed their pedagogical practices by trying to elicit how they addressed comprehension strategies when teaching lower classes (Spiro & Meyers, (1984); Grabe & Stoller, (2000); Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Parviz, 2003; Cain, 2010), and also intended to draw out their views on how they assessed readers' progress in class (Cain, 2010). Furthermore, the questions probed if they considered the classroom strategies they use in teaching of reading effective (Arthur, 1998; Parviz, 2003; N'Namdi, 2005; Adenyinka & Samson, 2007; The Centre for Literacy, 2008; Moloi, Morobe & Urwick, 2008).

The final section of the interview set out to elicit teachers' perceptions of the problems and challenges they faced in teaching reading, intending to draw out their views on the wider contextual factors which affect the teaching and learning of reading, with particular reference to their specific social context in Botswana. This includes the socioeconomic status of learners (Smith & Barrett 2010); the shortage or absence of books in the home (Mmegi, 2006; Onsomu, et al., 2006); the differential in the performance of girls and boys (Fuller, Hua, & Snyder, 1994;

Milon, 1993; Davis, 1987); and the limitations of resources, such as library resources and books in the school setting (Adenyinka & Samson, 2007; Mmegi, 2006; Clark, 2010; Francis, Lance & Lietzau, 2010).

After constructing the interview protocol, I passed it to my supervisor and we worked on it together to find out if it will yield data which will give a deeper perspective into the research phenomenon under study (Wellington, 2000). Therefore, it was revised several times before the actual data collection. The exploration process of the interview protocol is explained by the following diagram.

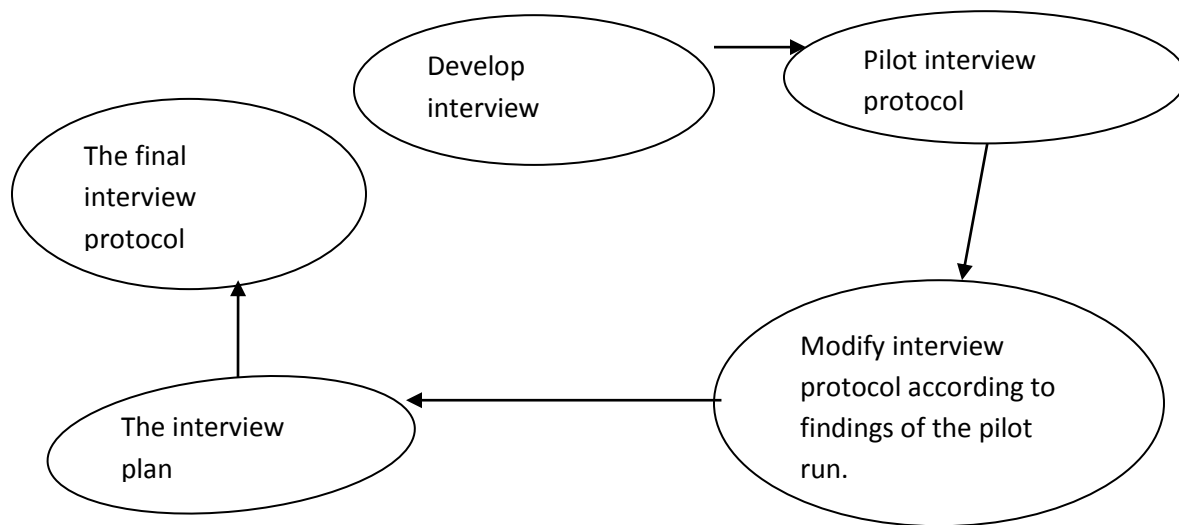


Figure (4.2): The exploration process of the interview protocol.

#### 4.5.1.3 Piloting of the interview

The pilot run was done as a pre-testing of the interview items in order to try and find out any deficiency that may not have been uncovered by simply reviewing of the items (Creswell, 2003). Moreover, “the results of the pilot run should identify misunderstandings, ambiguities, and useless or inadequate items” (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005, p. 171). Therefore, it provides the opportunity to rephrase some of the questions that are found to be difficult to answer and discuss

the items with the members of the pilot run groups to avoid results that would provide little or no information that could facilitate the study.

Piloting is considered helpful and according to Bell, (2004) any instrument used to collect data should be piloted in order to find out if the questions are suitable for the drawn sample. This is also to check if the instructions are clearly written. This is to help the researcher with “some preliminary warnings and assistance on problem areas (Kane, 1991, p. 73). Furthermore, this is also to help in reconstructing questions felt to be either sensitive or meaningless so that the researcher could make them explicit by either rephrasing or rewriting them before carrying out the research. For this study, the interview protocol was piloted with two teachers who were not included in the sample study. This was firstly “to check that all questions and instructions are clear and to remove out items which do not yield usable data” (Bell, 1999, p. 128) and secondly, to check that my interview technique was sufficiently open and invitational to draw out rich responses.

#### **4.5.1.4 Conducting the interviews**

Before conducting any interview, there is need to inform interviewees of the purpose of the research and how the data obtained through the interview will be used (Bell, 2004). Therefore, I had a meeting with all the interviewees to brief them about my research study and also to get acquainted with them at a personal level. I also wanted to establish rapport with them so that they would feel at ease during the interview (Cohen, Manion, 2000). They were informed of intended duration for the interview (45-60 minutes) and I explained that the interview was to take the form of an open conversation rather than a question and answer technique, even though an interview protocol was used to allow me to steer the conversation towards the research questions.

The participants were given the opportunity to choose the date and time for the interviews and some chose to stay after school time which was from 14:00hrs while some chose school break time. The interviews for school 1 were conducted in their HOD’s office while the interviews for schools 2, 3 and 4 were conducted in the schools staff rooms, their respective classrooms or the library because we wanted to work in a comfortable, quiet and uninterrupted environment. During the interview session, each interviewee was told to feel free to respond to the questions

because the information gathered from the interview will be confidential and their names will remain anonymous.

During the interviews, I did not take any notes because I wanted to concentrate and give my full attention to the interview without intimidating the interviewees because my main aim was to elicit greater responses from them. Practising how to conduct the interview in a pilot study made the actual interviews to go smoothly, especially with helping teacher to feel at ease after a hectic teaching day.

#### **4.5.1.5 Stimulated recall interviews**

The stimulated recall interviews followed the lesson observation and their purpose was primarily to probe teachers' thinking about the pedagogical decisions taken in the lesson. The methodology of stimulated recall is useful because it seeks to provide access to teachers' thoughts based on occurrences of actual classroom practice (Gass & Mackey, 2000). The stimulus for the interviews was provided by using the digital recorder to record classroom lessons. According to Gass & Mackey, (2000, p. 17) "...the theoretical foundation for stimulated recall relies on an information-processing approach whereby the use of and access to memory structures is entranced, if not guaranteed, by a prompt that aids in the recall of information". The classroom lessons were digitally recorded and after school the researcher met with the individual teacher for the stimulated recall session.

Prior to listening to the digital recorder the researcher asked the teacher about the lesson, the sequence of events, major lesson segments, and the perceived success of the lesson. As with some of the preliminary interviews, some of the stimulated recall sessions were translated from Setswana to English because the teachers requested to answer in Setswana. I had time to listen to the digital recorded several times while waiting for the teacher because the stimulated recall sessions were conducted after school. After listening to the digital recorder several times, I would make a list of questions that would assist in prompting discussion relating to the behaviours observed during the lesson. The teachers were also given time to discuss issues they observed and felt that were pertinent.

#### **4.5.1.6 Translation and transcription of the interviews**

Radnor (1994) is of the view that transcription is an interpretation of speech to print; it should be treated carefully to reproduce a script that is satisfactory both for the interviewer and the interviewee. This might include enhancing the language for clarity and acceptability of the data. The interviews were recorded using a digital recorder and transcribed to facilitate later analysis. From a semi-structured interview, the complexity of producing a full transcription that is acceptable to both interviewer and interviewee can be overlooked (Wiersma and Jurs, 2005). It is neither feasible, nor sometimes possible, to reproduce every utterance recorded on tape to the written word. If the exact transcription could be reproduced, it may satisfy accuracy criteria (Radnor, 1994). However, the imprecision of everyday speech could prove unhelpful to the research analysis and a discomfort to the informant when validating the transcription. The goal was to transcribe the semi-structured interviews as fully as possible, without altering the exact words uttered by the interviewees.

Accuracy in transcribing can be achieved through sensitive interpretation of the interview and the best person to do this is the interviewer (Wellington, 2000; Mills, 2003). The advantage of the interviewer transcribing an interview is that one becomes intimately familiar with the complexities and subtleties of the data. Post-interview notes about the context, setting and atmosphere can be added to make subsequent analysis easier and more informative (Radnor, 1994; Wilkinson, 2000). The interviews conducted and recorded in Setswana were translated into English before all the interviews were transcribed in full after listening to them several times. This was not an easy task for me as translation can sometimes become tricky in terms of reproducing the exact words said by the interviewee.

#### **4.5.2 Classroom observation**

The classroom observations were intended to gather qualitative information about the teachers' pedagogical practices in how they teach reading in lower primary classes in Botswana. In second language research, observations are often used to collect data on how learners use language in learning and teaching processes in the classroom (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005). For the observations, I also was a non-participant observer – I sat discreetly at the back of the classroom and I did not get involved in the lesson in any way. My direct participation was restricted because I was

concerned that more active involvement might influence teachers' practices, leading to my becoming a factor in the research environment (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). Classroom observation is useful not only in its own right, in providing valuable data about events, but also in helping to focus and verify interviews (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Wiersma & Jurs, 2005) even though it does not allow access to the thinking of teachers at the time of teaching. However, there is always danger that observers may influence events by their very presence but such problems are lessened, however, when the observer makes several visits and becomes a more accepted part of the class (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). I felt that to familiarise myself with classes and become an accepted part of the class, I had to visit them twice in order for the class to get used to myself being there before the observation process. Permission was granted by the HODs' in each school.

The quality of the observation data was dependent on careful capturing of all the relevant activities and behaviours that took place in relation to the teaching of reading. It was not possible to video the lessons as the teachers were not comfortable with this and felt that it might distract the classes. In order to create a record of each observed lesson, I created a structured observation protocol (See Appendix 6).

#### **4.5.2.1 Construction of structured observation protocol**

An observation protocol I employed was from previous research on transfer of knowledge from reading professional development to classroom practice (Madden & Almasi, 2006). In the initial protocol, there were 33 features (See Appendix 5). In designing my observation schedule, I selected 11 features (See Appendix 6) from the full set of 33 behaviour features because I felt that they addressed the research questions of the study, and are also drawing on ideas deriving from the literature review and the interview protocol. I was also interested in observational behaviour features that would help me to identify evidence that linked to teachers' pedagogical practices that relate to the semi structured interview protocol.

The section in the interview protocol that elicited teachers' views on how they consider comprehension strategies should be addressed related to the observation items that sought to establish if the learners were engaged in the construction of meaning from the text in the class,

if the teacher engages the learners' in instruction to develop word recognition strategies, and if the teacher engages learners in learning to use comprehension strategies through modelling, guided practice and independence practice. The interview question that set out to probe the perceptions of teachers' on the role of phonics instruction in lower classes was to be observed in class to check if what they perceived as their pedagogical subject knowledge was put into practice. The interview question related to the observation item that sought to establish if teachers engage the learners in the development of phonemic awareness, phonics and fluency through a variety of authentic literacy opportunities, models and demonstrations. The question that set out to elicit how teachers' assess learners progress in the interview protocol related to the item in the observation protocol that considered how teachers arrange schedule to provide extra time for struggling readers. The questions that probed if the teachers considered the classroom strategies they use in teaching of reading to be effective in the interview protocol related to most of the items in the observation protocol. Therefore, to confirm if the items were carried out, it was essential to verify that the following classroom strategies were implemented in the class: I checked if the teachers planned and implemented instructions that correspond to the curriculum and teacher's guides. I also checked if teachers actively engaged learners in the reading task to avoid learners being passive and teachers being teachers centred and if the learners' are given adequate time to engage in authentic reading task. I checked if teachers value the learners understanding of print and if they engage them in social interaction when reading or learning to read. Furthermore, I checked if the teacher activates the learners' prior knowledge.

The protocol also covers classroom management, assessment, a record of the objective covered, time the teacher spent on reading instruction and the time children spent on reading. The observable behaviours were written in a list form to make it easy to place a check mark by features observed during observation. I also observed other occurrences that do not necessarily appear in the protocol and wrote notes on what occurred during the observation

#### **4.5.2.2 Process of classroom observation**

The appointments for classroom observation were set previously with the teachers in each school because I did not want to disrupt their teaching schedule. They also allowed me to sit for an hour in their classes as a preparatory visit to get them used to me. During the process of classroom

observation, I observed most of the participants once for (30-60 minutes), the time allocated for the teaching of reading. The first observation was conducted as planned but for the second observation only 6 teachers agreed to be observed. Before observation procedure, for each class, it was important and helpful to obtain an idea of the routine of each class during the teaching of reading. Ethically, and to secure co-operation, the purpose of the observation was outlined to the teachers before conducting the observation.

The observed teachers were those who participated in the semi-structured interview and they were initially informed that the interview will be followed by an observation. The size of the classes observed varied between 30 to 45 learners and in one school in the urban area had a double shift and the observed teachers made prior arrangements to use the classrooms during observation. This is because teaching outside in an open area was going to distract the learners. During each lesson observed, I recorded the teacher with a digital recorder, took brief notes and completed as much of the observational protocol as possible. In view of the nature of my study, the need to capture contextualized data in situ, at the time and place of occurrence was important (Creswell, 2003; Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Wiersma & Jurs, 2005). I tried to capture as much information as possible on the observation sheet. The emphasis was on recording events as they unfolded for each lesson observed. After the lesson, I later listened to the digital recorder to clarify or add to the observation record while waiting for the teacher for the stimulated recall interview after school.

#### **4.5.2.3 Analysis of the interviews**

Mills, (2003) defines data analysis as “an attempt by the teacher researcher to summarise the data that have been collected in a dependable, accurate, reliable and coherent manner” (p. 104). In order to manage the data in such a way I made use of the qualitative data analysis software, NVivo 8. Specialist software is increasingly used for data analysis in the social sciences (Richards & Richards, 1994; Silverman, 2009) and is both lauded and critiqued by researchers (Lu & Shulman, 2008; Evers, et al., 2011). On the one hand, some have argued that computer software reduces rich qualitative data to numerical frequency counts, and risks decontextualising the data set (Lu & Shulman 2008), itemising it into small, disconnected chunks. Others, however, have maintained the software permits much greater management and manipulation of



data, and allows links and connections to be made between data elements, which are hard to achieve by manual means (Lewins & Silver, 2007). NVivo cannot undertake any of the processes of analysis, and is value-neutral. Although it is used for grounded theory analyses, it is also used for very determinist coding procedures such as closed content analysis, word frequencies, and can produce outputs which can be used in factor analysis and similar statistical procedures. In other words, it can be used to analyse qualitative data on a continuum from very open-ended, inductive approaches right through to closed statistical analyses: it assumes the values and priorities of the person undertaking the coding.

For my study, the principal advantage of using an electronic package like NVivo rather than manual coding procedures is that it facilitates the cross-checking and validation of coding much more easily than manual methods, and correcting inaccurate codes or generating new codes is very straightforward, compared with the very laborious process of making a change in a manual process. My belief is that using NVivo 8 has helped to add rigour to my research study and to the believability and quality of the analysis. It helped in organising and managing the data files as well as supporting the representation of coding in a neat and easily-trackable manner. However in line with the expectations of interpretive research, it is still me, as researcher who made the decisions about data organization, coding and analysis.

The interview transcripts were analyzed by entering the transcribed data into NVivo 8 software package. My supervisor set up a tutorial for me on how to use the software and we worked together on the first transcript after transferring all the transcribed files into the program. Thereafter, data were analyzed inductively to look for patterns and categories (Patton, 2001) following the procedure outlined by Lincoln & Guba, (1985) of:

- Immersion: producing detailed transcriptions (from diaries, interviews, observations, etc.)
- Categorisation: assigning categories.
- Reduction: grouping categories in 'themes'.
- Triangulation: checking themes against all transcripts, preferably with other people.
- Interpretation: making sense of data with new model or established theory

The process of transcription allowed me to develop familiarity with my data, and each interview was read through several times before beginning the coding process. The categorisation process, described by Lincoln & Guba, is the classifying of individual pieces of data and is suggested by the researcher's examination and questioning of the data at hand, or as Weaver & Atkinson, (1994, p. 31) describe it:

*“the strategy whereby data are segmented and tagged according to the researcher's definition of units of meaning, so that those segments which have common or related meaning can be drawn together in one place for analysis”.*

For the first stage of the categorisation of my data, I analysed the interviews using the broad content areas of the semi-structured interview protocol, namely; teachers' subject knowledge, teachers' pedagogical practices and challenges in the teaching of reading. I then coded the data inductively to identify codes, which provided a nuanced picture of teachers' subject knowledge and their pedagogical beliefs. The codes were assigned names and operational definitions that described the concepts for the ease of referencing. Some codes were created while reading for the first time and others arose after reading the transcripts for several times. Coding using NVivo 8 helped me to edit while coding and splitting up the information load that the nodes were being asked to carry was seen essential and helpful (See Appendices 3 and 4 with the coding stripes).

#### **4.5.2.4 Analysis of classroom observation**

In the analysis of classroom observation, ticks were placed against the features in the classroom observation protocol as an evidence of the behaviour that transpired in the classroom and were grouped together. Grouping them together was to give me an idea on the features that were displayed during the lesson. Therefore, classroom observation and notes were analyzed by identifying the instructional incidents as evidence of what transpired in the classroom and matched them against to the features in the classroom observation protocol. The brief notes taken also filled the gap where it was felt to be necessary.

#### 4.6 Trustworthiness of the study

There is a view among some qualitative researchers that in order to satisfactorily demonstrate thoroughness in a study, the criteria should approximate positivist terminology (Creswell, 1994). This is because the strategy is seen to facilitate the acceptance of qualitative research by positivist community. Therefore, this lead to Lincoln & Guba, (1985) developing criteria for trustworthiness and the techniques in the following table were then viewed as evidence of the appropriate criteria.

<b>Positivist</b>	<b>Interpretative (Constructivist)</b>
Internal validity	Credibility
External validity	Transferability
Reliability	Dependability
Objectivity	Confirmability

Table (4.3): Parallel Criteria for Positivist and Interpretative Research

##### 4.6.1 Credibility

Techniques for identifying credibility are where the researcher has a prolonged engagement with the participants, constant observation, and progressive subjectivity (Lincoln & Guba, (1985). Therefore, engaging in preliminary and stimulated recall interviews and classroom observation methods lead to the data being valid and reliable. Furthermore, credibility was met through piloting the research instruments before collecting data.

##### 4.6.2 Transferability

The main technique a researcher considers for the purpose of transferability is achieved by providing as detailed a description as possible about the time, the context and the culture (Lincoln & Guba, (1985). When these have been addressed thoroughly, it enables other researchers to assess the findings and conclusions that are presented and determine what they can

then make use of by transference. Therefore, transferability was achieved because I listened and observed carefully, was candid to the interviewees, recorded data accurately, began writing reports early and used primary data in report for final report. Throughout the developmental process, I was always seeking feedback from my supervisor in order to achieve transferability in the research study. It was also illustrated in terms of practical significance of the research and dissemination of findings in appropriate forms to relevant individuals and groups.

#### **4.6.3 Dependability**

Different researchers reach similar interpretations while repeated examinations produce similar observations while dealing with the same study. In actual fact multiple researchers produce similar interpretations of the same data. Essentially, more than one researcher could collect different data with different findings while doing research in the same setting and “as long as the results are not contradictory, both sets could be reliable” (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005, p. 215). This was done thoroughly by being cautious when coding the data as I also cross checked it manually which was useful for the study. Therefore, I feel that dependability has been addressed.

#### **4.6.4 Confirmability**

Confirmation of the data collected in the study and its interpretations was done by tracking the raw data, interview summaries, observation of categories, data analysis and the logic used to arrive at the interpretations of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I feel that this was achieved because the study was regularly checked and reviewed by both the supervisor and myself in the developmental process.

#### **4.7 Ethical issues**

In administering research, ethical issues have to be taken into consideration (Wellington 2000). The process of carrying out this research study entailed observing various research ethics carefully which not only set standards of what is ethically possible but also contextualize the data while safeguarding its ecological validity (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). This was an important consideration in the research process and it justified exclusive focus on access negotiation before and during the research process.

I had to write a letter seeking permission to conduct research in the schools together with evidence of my identity, curriculum vitae and a proposal of the study to the MoE. These were accompanied by acceptance letters from the University of Botswana and from my supervisor that were granting me permission to conduct research. An official stamp from the University of Exeter, School of Graduate Studies was endorsed to verify that I am a student in the University and that my research is for academic purposes. This was to pave way for smooth interaction as well as ensuring proper assistance from the MOE, Chief Education officer (CEO), Principal Education Officers (PEOs)' and respective school personnel.

Official permission from MOE and CEO prompted PEO1- South East and PEO 11- Kgatleng West to write letters to the head teachers informing them to allow me to carry out the study in their schools. The head teachers asked the HOD Languages to assist me as they are responsible for teachers in the area of reading. Considerable attention was paid to choosing the participants and this was done by HOD languages after the head teachers communicated with them about my intentions. In each school, the researcher held a brief meeting with the participants and their HODs' to address them about her intentions about the research study and also to know them at a professional level. Interviewees were asked for permission to use a digital recorder during the interview stating the importance of the recorded data during data analysis stage and they all granted me the permission to use it.

A consent form from Graduate School of Education in Exeter (See Appendix 7) was given to the participants by the researcher to read before explaining the contents of the form to them. They were asked to sign it if they agreed to participate in the study and all the teachers chosen by their HODs' signed the consent forms which may also improve the validity of data because the researcher assures interviewees of their rights and security (Wilkinson, 2000).

During the interview session, each interviewee was told that she should feel free to respond to the questions because the information gathered from the interview is confidential and that their names are going to remain anonymous. Knowing the appropriate measures that I have taken to protect their confidentiality and anonymity was essential because "confidentiality of information should be assured, and the respondent should not be threatened by the questions" (Wiersma &

Jurs, 2005, p. 189). This also satisfies ethical concerns which, Wellington, (2000) insists, should be at the forefront of any research study.

#### **4.8 Summary of methodological framework and methods**

The chapter has set out the necessary contentions for each of the decisions made in relation to the methodological and implementation issues that impact on this study. Therefore, the arguments prepare the way for examining the data collection and data analysis strategies that will be dealt with in chapters five, six and seven.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DATA FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW**

### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the data findings and interpretations as pertains to the research question, *what pedagogical subject knowledge underpins the teaching of reading in lower primary education?* The data was collected through interviews with teachers from rural and urban schools, guided by a semi-structured questionnaire. The findings were then categorised and analysed on the basis of emerging themes. The preliminary semi-structured interviews were undertaken with ten participants teaching lower primary education in Botswana. The interviews were first analysed using the broad content areas of the semi-structured interview protocol. They were then coded inductively to identify sub-codes, which provided a nuanced picture of teachers' subject knowledge and their pedagogical beliefs.

### **5.1 Teachers' pedagogical beliefs and subject knowledge**

The interviews with teachers sought to investigate the nature of teachers' pedagogical subject knowledge for the teaching of reading. Since the participants were trained primary school teachers, it was expected that their pedagogical subject knowledge of teaching reading in lower primary education would include phonological knowledge, knowledge of progression in reading and knowledge of skills required in reading. Through the process of coding and thematic clustering, five themes were identified:

- The importance of approaching reading through integrated language skills.
- The importance of the role of phonics in teaching reading.
- The importance of comprehension instruction in reading.
- The importance of assessment of the reader's progress in reading.

The table below provides an explanation of each of these themes and a simple frequency count, showing how many comments in the interviews were coded against each theme.

Theme	Theme description	Frequency count (Number of references)
Integrated language skills	This refers to teachers' comments that teaching of reading needs to be approached using all the four language skills.	14
Role of phonics	This refers to comments of teachers about the role of phonics in teaching reading.	28
Comprehension instruction	This refers to comments of teachers about how they facilitate comprehension instruction.	38
Assessment	This refers to comments of teacher' on how they assess readers' progress.	25

Table 5.1: Themes, their description and simple frequency counts, showing comments for each theme.

The findings in Table 5.1 are thematically presented below:

### **5.1.1 The importance of approaching reading through the integrated language skills**

The participants felt that reading should be approached using integrated language skills. Their belief is that it should be understood that the listening, speaking, reading and writing skills, which are the basic skills in language learning, are interrelated. Therefore, the aim is to integrate them when teaching. Integrating the language skills enriches vocabulary across the curriculum because the abilities to read and comprehend develop writing and speaking. Several illustrations in this regard are provided in the following extracts:



*A good reader builds and enriches vocabulary read by speaking and writing using it in other subjects and in this way expanding knowledge base for further reading (Maru).*

*The reading skills are important because the learners comprehend other subjects and if I do not develop the reading skills, then I will not be doing them justice (Thobo).*

The concept of reading is more complex than the other skills and thus makes it difficult to teach. One participant observed that the reason why reading is sometimes neglected is because it is a difficult language skill to teach and the following extract illustrates the point:

*Teaching reading is difficult so much that we prefer the writing exercises and in the process we neglect reading (Peo).*

The reading skill is not taught every day. Therefore, one participant developed her own teaching strategy to which she devoted some of the time scheduled for teaching languages for reading to show the importance of the skill in learning. Her response became apparent when looking at the following extract:

*What I did last year was that I scheduled 15 minutes a day for reading out of the 60 minutes scheduled for teaching languages including listening, speaking, reading and writing to encourage pupils to read (Maru).*

It seems that the interviewees are aware of the importance of approaching reading through integrated language skills and their opinions might be influenced by the fact that the curriculum in Botswana is structured around the four language skills. It seems that approaching reading using integrated language skills is important as they are the basis in language teaching and learning. However, despite the general understanding of the importance of approaching reading through the integrated language skills, the classroom observations indicated very little time seemed to be spent on oral activities, which are equally important in the teaching and learning of reading.

### **5.1.2 The importance of the role of phonics in teaching reading**

The role of phonics in the teaching of reading was a recurrent theme in the interview responses of participants. Two participants mentioned that teaching phonics is the basis for learning to read and the following extracts illustrate their point:

*I start with the letters of the alphabet and then teach the learners how to produce the sounds that are attached to the letters, which is the beginning phase of phonics reading (Phetso).*

*I think teaching the children letter-sound relationship helps them to learn how to pronounce words and read sentences with confidence. If they master the phonics in lower standards then they will not have problems in upper standards where they have to read a lot of texts from other subjects (Metsi).*

Participants mentioned that they provide phonics instruction in teaching because they help the learners' in pronunciation of words while reading. Teaching them the sounds of vowels and consonants is reported to be done by using different types of phonics activities. For example:

*I teach them the basic sounds of vowels and I pronounce them while they are listening and then they pronounce the vowels after me. They learn how to pronounce the short and long vowels because this will help them to read and pronounce the words well (Masimo).*

*I use the phonic frieze chart to teach them how to pronounce letters and letter sounds (Maru).*

Even though participants provided phonic instructions when teaching reading, two of the teachers had different views. They indicated that the teaching of phonics is difficult for them: one participant mentioned that she has not taught phonics in her teaching career because she has been teaching upper standards whilst another acknowledged it was a challenge. This is illustrated in the following extracts:

*Teaching phonics is a challenge for me and I struggle when I teach children (Peo).*

*I am not really familiar with phonics because this is my first year to teach standard 4 as I have been teaching upper standards (Thobo).*

The teachers seem to be aware that learners at their earliest stage should be equipped with phonics knowledge, which would reinforce reading and learning across the curriculum.

### 5.1.3 The importance of comprehension instruction in reading

The theme that received the most comments from the participants related to the teaching of comprehension. Whilst phonics supports learners in decoding text, without comprehension, they are unable to engage meaningfully with reading. If the learners lack both decoding and comprehension skills, which are believed to be equally important to the process of successful reading skills at that stage, then it will be difficult for them to cope with reading in upper standards. Two participants view comprehension as essential in reading and that teachers can foster their learners' comprehension by engaging them in different activities. Their views are emphasized in the following extracts:

*I think the methods that I use are effective because most of the pupils are showing signs of improvement in reading and understanding what they read about (Masimo).*

*To check if they really comprehend, I ask them questions and if they give correct answers, then I will know that they have comprehended (Masa).*

Some of the participants believe that vocabulary is important in comprehension and is the basic aspect of learning how to read in lower primary education. This is because learners require sufficient oral vocabulary base for reading. If vocabulary is difficult for the reader, then they will fail to comprehend whatever they are reading, therefore providing explicit vocabulary explanation before reading is essential. The following extracts illustrate their point:

*I select vocabulary words from the text that I feel will be difficult and explain the meaning of the words and ask them to create their own sentences before reading (Maru)*

*They might not understand the text because they are not familiar with vocabulary used in the text (Masa).*

According to some of the participants, observing punctuation when reading assists in comprehension and the following extracts emphasize their point:

*I think a good reader will have the competence of reading fluently, pronouncing the words correctly following the punctuation marks when reading (Maru).*

*I stress the importance of knowing punctuations because they are very important to interpret the message well (Namune).*

There is a general agreement among the teachers that together with phonics, comprehension is central to the development of reading by students at lower standards and later at higher standards. To test for comprehension, some teachers used a question approach in each lesson while others believed that students' vocabulary was valuable in comprehension. Others still felt comprehension could better be developed by emphasising punctuation.

#### **5.1.4 The importance of assessment of reader's progress in reading**

Teachers' responses in interview indicated their view of the importance of assessing progress in reading. Assessment of the reading progress of learners is done either formally by tests and recording their marks or informally by asking questions to check if they have comprehended the text. Participants mentioned different activities that they do with learners to assess readers' progress in reading, which includes checking if they pronounce words well and if they are fluent when reading. The following extracts illustrate their different views:

*They read individually to check if they pronounce the words correctly (Pelo).*

*After, teaching, I give them notes so that they read at home. In the morning, I ask them to read for me and those who read at home will read even much faster and those who are struggling, I will know that they did not read (Masa)*

Besides individual assessment, it is also mentioned that learners' progress in reading is also carried out through testing activities. Some of the participants mentioned that they assess learners reading abilities through written questions and tests. For example:

*In post reading, pupils should do the activities that test if they have understood the text read by answering questions which can be done in different ways suitable for the level of the pupils (Peo.)*

One participant had a different strategy of assessing learners reading performance because her interest is in testing learners' reading speed which indicates how fluent learners could be when reading. The following extract illustrates the point:

*If I have 20 words, I count how many words they can read in specified minutes and that is testing learner's reading speed (Phetso).*

Assessment is also done by oral or written activities after reading and it is illustrated by the following extract:

*They should do either oral or written activities to find out if they have understood the text which might be in a form of answering questions from the text, doing spelling or written text in a sequential order (Matlho).*

Participants are aware that it is important to assess learners' progress individually because it helps in detecting their problems in reading at an early learning stage. It is evident from the responses that besides individual assessment, the teacher dictates spelling of words, do oral and written activities, as well as test learners' reading speed. However, despite all this, the classroom observations revealed that assessment practices did not form part of the main teaching and learning activities, instead they were relegated to the periphery.

## **5.2 Teachers' pedagogical practices**

The interviews with teachers sought to investigate the pedagogical practices which teachers claimed they used in the teaching of reading. Teachers' pedagogical practices are teaching strategies used by teachers in teaching reading. The following four themes were identified and are discussed in this section.

- The significance of knowing learners' background in the teaching of reading.
- The specified syllabus objectives for teaching reading.
- The teachers' attributes that are displayed when teaching reading.
- The teaching strategies used to teach reading.

The table below provides an explanation of each of these themes and a simple frequency count, showing how many comments were made for each theme.

Theme	Theme description	Number of references	Number of teachers
Knowledge of learners' background	This refers to comments of teachers' about the significance of knowing learners' background in reading.	18	8
Syllabus	This refers to comments of teachers about the specified syllabus objectives and how they impact on their teaching.	11	8
Teachers' attributes	This refers to comments of teachers' attributes that should be displayed when teaching reading.	40	10
Teaching strategies	This refers to comments of teachers about teaching strategies used to teach reading.	38	10

Table 5.2: Themes, their description and simple frequency counts, showing comments for each theme.

### 5.2.1 The significance of knowing learners' background in teaching reading

Being aware of learners' background is vital in learning because their experiences and abilities differ widely. This knowledge may assist the teachers in catering for the learners individual learning differences. Some of the participants highlighted the importance of knowing the learners' backgrounds, because catering for their needs could be essential, especially for those in lower standards. The following extracts emphasis their point:

*In lower standards, knowing background knowledge and pupils experiences is very important before teaching reading because the teacher will find it much better when selecting reading materials for children and will also know their strengths and weaknesses (Phetso).*

*Knowing children's background is also helpful because one will not find it difficult to cater for their different abilities (Peo).*

*I really have to understand my pupils because some of them are fast; some slow and the most important thing is to know how to cater for both of them because of their individual learning differences (Masa).*

One participant is of the opinion that learners may not necessarily be successful at comprehending a text if their background knowledge is not activated. This is illustrated by the following extract:

*If the children's background knowledge is built before engaging them in reading, then they might understand the text (Pelo).*

It seems that some of the participants are aware of the significance of knowing learners' background because their argument is that it would help them to know their strengths and weaknesses and therefore, guide them when preparing reading activities for their class. Another important point raised was that knowing their background helps in selecting reading material for the learners which might not be the case in the situation where there is shortage of reading materials.

### **5.2.2 The specified syllabus objectives for teaching reading**

Some of the participants mentioned that their pedagogical practices are structured in such a way that they are syllabus oriented. Therefore, teaching is tailored towards the objectives and there is stipulated timeline, which determines when the objectives have to be covered. Some of the participants find themselves under pressure to cover the content for the objectives and feel that reading is not given much time in the syllabus. As the following examples suggest:

*Most of the time there are not enough objectives of reading in the syllabus and that is why reading is not well done because we focus on the objectives for grammar, writing letters and compositions (Maru).*

*The time is not enough and I just want to push the objectives so that at the end of the term, I should have covered enough content (Peo).*

Syllabus objectives are identified as a constraint relating to teaching reading and teachers find themselves in a situation where they have to teach these objectives very quickly in order to cover

enough content for the term. In this case, it implies that teaching of reading is not effectively done as the focus is not on learners but in covering the stipulated objectives for that term.

### **5.2.3 The teachers' attributes that should be displayed when teaching reading**

In the interviews teachers made more comments about teacher attributes than any other code. Teachers' attributes that should be displayed when teaching reading were stressed by the participants as they appear to contribute to the learners' success in reading. Having knowledge of how to incorporate relevant reading activities in their teaching through different methods/approaches seem to be an important prerequisite for the teacher to display when teaching reading, as the following extract demonstrates:

*Knowing the relevant reading skills and teaching methods suitable for teaching reading is essential especially in lower classes where children are still learning how to read. Varying the methods make the reading lessons interesting (Metsi).*

Participants believe that facilitating the teaching of reading and motivating readers by having a reading friendly classroom is essential. Moreover, showing good personality traits appear to be associated with learners' success in reading and the following extract emphasizes their views:

*Patience is very important because children need someone who is patient and who loves them. The teacher should also be creative because they need a variety of activities so that they become interested in reading (Phetso).*

Acknowledging learners' efforts in a form of positive reinforcement is also raised as one of the attributes of the teacher, for example:

*Every little thing the child does counts a lot in reading and teachers should appreciate the little things done by children and also acknowledge their responses (Thobo).*

Teachers who effectively teach learners to value reading books also demonstrate this through modelling reading behaviour and enthusiasm. This is because if the teacher serves as a reading model for the learners to emulate when they read, and to become more interested in reading. The following extracts emphasize their view:

*I think the teacher should be creative and love reading by modelling and sharing reading strategies and personal joy of reading with children (Pelo).*



*I read for them while they are listening to act as a role model before they read (Masimo).*

*Creativity is essential because they need a variety of activities. That is why I feel translation is the best option if I have tried all the techniques and they are not working for me (Phetso).*

To sum up, participants believe that teachers demonstrating good personality traits, such as empathy with the learners and enthusiasm, as well as knowledge of how to incorporate relevant reading activities in their teaching, are associated with learners' success in reading.

#### **5.2.4 The teaching strategies used by teachers to teach reading**

In the reading classroom, the teacher facilitates and motivates the reader through using different teaching methods. The teacher fosters learners' expectations about reading by using different strategies in order to arouse their interest in reading. Participants suggest that this can be done by asking learners warm-up questions in pre-reading, which will provide a purpose for reading. They mentioned many methods/strategies that they use to teach reading and the following extracts illustrate their point:

*The teacher should do pre-reading activities to activate children's prior knowledge of the words used in the text (Matlho).*

*I use the phonic method because I want them to understand the letter-sound relationship in order to pave way for reading words. I also use guided reading, individual reading, pre-reading and after reading activities (Pelo).*

*I like child centred methods. I use the look and say, language experience approach, silent and choral reading methods and reading in pairs. Individual reading where they read aloud helps the teacher to detect their reading problems and assist them (Metsi).*

*Mostly, I read while they listen or they read after me because I feel that modelling good reading behaviour might help them to pronounce words and use punctuations. I also act as a facilitator while they continue with their tasks (Namune).*

*We also have the method of drop and read to encourage our kids to read anything that they come across (Maru).*

One participant indicated that she reads to the learners, then they read in groups and finally in pairs. This is a sign of engaging them in social group interaction because learners sometimes learn better if they read with their peers. Her approach became apparent when looking at the following extract:

*I read for them and then they read in groups then as time goes on, I start to select those that are fast learners and slow learners and group them in pairs, so that they can help each other (Peo).*

### 5.3 The challenges faced by teachers and children in the teaching of reading

The interviews with teachers sought to investigate the challenges faced by teachers and children in the teaching of reading. The difficulties in the teaching of reading that both the teachers and learners faced were different in the sense that children were faced with challenges. Two sub-themes were identified for the above theme and these are highlighted and discussed. They are:

- Children's challenges
- Teachers' challenges

The table below provides explanation of each of these sub-themes and a simple frequency count, showing how many comments were made for each.

Sub-theme	Sub-theme description	Number of references	Number of teacher
Children's challenges	This refers to comments of teachers' on challenges children face in learning to read.	26	7
Teachers' challenges	This refers to comments of teachers about the difficulties they face in teaching reading.	16	8

Table 5.3: Sub-themes, their description and simple frequency counts, showing comments for each

### 5.3.1 The challenges faced by children in learning how to read

Participants revealed two main socio-cultural factors and some instructional problems as the main issues that influenced how children learned how to read. Some of the participants revealed that learners had constraints of not having good reading foundation and if they were not encouraged to read, then reading effectively became a problem for them. This is illustrated by the following extract:

*Lack of mastering reading skills in standard one and it could also be the teacher not putting much effort to see that the student grasp something from the onset could be a challenge for them (Metsi).*

Several participants observed that sometimes they were responsible for some of the learners' reading problems. This was because if they did not provide learners with moral support they would have low self-esteem. Also, learners should be engaged in suitable activities that would facilitate their reading. The following extracts illustrate the point:

*Teachers do not encourage children and sometimes discourage them from reading in front of the class by being harsh and allowing other children to laugh at them when they make mistakes (Peo).*

*One observation that I have made with my pupils is that they are shy. They do not want to be seen by others that they cannot read. I think they have low self-esteem because others laugh at them when they read (Phetso).*

Some of the participants indicated that the socio-cultural factors also influenced how children learned to read. Their main concern was that learners were not assisted at home and some of the parents did not monitor their children's school attendance. The following extracts illustrate their point:

*You find children not learning at the same pace because some of them stay for a month absent from school and when they arrive, it is time for writing tests. This is why I translate to Setswana so that they can all understand the lesson (Metsi).*

*The problem is with parents because if the child cannot read and the parent is not helping, then it is difficult for the teacher if pupils tend to give up (Masa).*

*I translate to Setswana a lot to interpret some of the concepts because that is when they could comprehend the text better (Namune).*

One participant felt that some of the parents did monitor their children's school work, especially the young parents, and this was illustrated by the following comment:

*Some of the parents are really willing to help especially if they are young because they want to see the progress of their kids (Maru).*

Teachers talked of parental involvement as a variable factor, which sometimes hindered learners from learning to read as they were not assisted or motivated to read at home. This issue was raised by participants teaching in the rural areas and only by two participants teaching in the urban schools. However, looking at some of the participants' pedagogical subject knowledge, it became apparent that they were also to be critiqued for reading constraints faced by learners. This might be due to not providing learners with suitable instructional behaviours that would encourage them to read. Failing to provide moral support to those who are vulnerable in class, might lower their self-esteem and deny them the opportunity to engage in reading across the curriculum.

### **5.3.2 The challenges faced by teachers' when teaching reading**

Most of the participants revealed that they came across difficulties when teaching reading while others indicated issues of professional development and resourcing. Some of the issues raised concerned shortage of classrooms as the following extract shows:

*The greatest challenge is that we do not have enough teaching resources because pupils are still sharing textbooks. We also do not have enough classrooms and when teaching outside under the tree, one cannot teach reading properly (Masimo).*

The participants also mentioned shortage of teaching and reading resources. The following extracts illustrate their point:

*There are no reading posters as we used to have in old MAPEP kit because they were useful as they illustrated the content in text books (Pelo).*

*We have a very serious shortage of materials and there is nothing we can really do but we have to do teaching aids (Peo).*

Another constraint identified by some of the participants related to teaching resources in a form of textbooks, teachers' guides and school library where learners could have access to different reading materials. In many situations, the teaching resources represented the hidden curriculum and thus played a significant part in the process of teaching and learning reading. Teaching resources are crucial and should be accessed by all learners in the class rather than learners sharing books as they do not read at the same pace. The following extracts illustrate the point:

*We do not have textbooks and there is no school library (Matlho).*

*We do not have enough reading materials and the parents do not give us support at all (Thobo).*

The issue of class size was raised by 3 (three) participants. Their main concern was that assisting all the learners during reading lessons was not easy because of the large numbers. The participants advocated that to overcome these constraints there was need to have more manageable numbers as it improved and maintained good teacher-learners relationship. It also increased teacher's knowledge of each learner's needs and thus monitoring their learning became easier. The following extract emphasizes their point:

*I think class size should be reduced to 30 pupils in a class instead of 40-45 because it is not easy to manage such a large class (Metsi).*

Another issue raised by two participants was that the teaching time allocated for reading was not sufficient because it was only scheduled once a week, which became apparent from these extracts:

*I think the time allocated for reading is not enough because reading is not taught every day as each language skill has to be taught (Masa).*

*We have introduced specialization in our school and I teach all the standard four classes languages and most of the time the kids do not finish their work (Maru).*

Lack of professional development was also an issue, which was raised by the participants, who felt that there was a lack of opportunities for in-service training in the teaching of reading. The following extracts illustrate their point:

*I would like to have in-service workshops on how to teach reading as new approaches are introduced and for us, who hold PTTC, we are only familiar with the traditional methods and we struggle with the new ones (Pelo).*

*Teachers should be well equipped with relevant reading techniques by attending in-service workshops where they will be updated with the current techniques and methods of teaching reading (Masimo).*

Looking at teachers' and children's difficulties in teaching and learning reading, there was evidence that both the constraints disadvantaged the learners in learning how to read. Therefore, participants wanted to have opportunities for in-service training in the teaching of reading and this could be because of the differences in their initial training, as they held different qualifications.

## **5.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has highlighted the pedagogical subject knowledge of the teachers that underpins the teaching of reading in lower primary education. The teachers' pedagogical subject knowledge of teaching reading in the interviews revealed that participants varied their teaching methods/techniques. The teachers' espoused pedagogical positions are in consonance with the position of Pressley et al. (2001), who observed that teachers who are considered outstanding balance skill instruction with real reading and writing when teaching learners who are in the first year of primary education. Furthermore, the teachers' pedagogical positions line up with the observations of Flynn & Stainthorp, (2006) who observed that many primary school teachers

want to adopt a balanced approach by drawing on all of the teaching methods at different times. The participants were aware that reading could not be taught in isolation but should be integrated with other language skills and this is how the curriculum in Botswana is structured. Although, teachers indicated that they check the learners' reading progress through varied assessment activities, it seems that dictation of spelling is the most favoured. This suggests a much stronger emphasis on the word level rather than on the text as a whole: an emphasis on the latter might better support reading comprehension.

Many of the teachers believed that phonics instruction is important in fostering reading through teaching the letter-sound relationships. Their belief in the power of phonic instructions in teaching and learning of reading is supported by Chall, (1967) who found that phonics instruction helped students to learn at a faster rate than those not given phonics instructions. Likewise, Stanovich & West, (1989) argued that phonic knowledge affects decoding ability positively. However, despite the positive view of the importance of phonics in the teaching and learning of reading, several participants indicated that they lacked the skills to teach phonics, an indication that not all teachers have the pedagogical expertise to develop the phonic decoding skills of their learners. Another important point raised by the participants was the importance of comprehension instruction in reading. However, the teachers' responses seem to focus mainly on providing explanation of new vocabulary, observing punctuation and pronunciation during reading, rather than enabling learners to find the meaning of the text by encouraging them to bring their own understanding and experiences to the text.

The interviews also reveal how variable access to pedagogical resources for teaching reading can limit teachers' classroom practice. Many of the teachers' instruction manuals for teaching ESL are the only guides on how to teach the content. These also serve as teacher's training manuals for beginning teachers. For the teachers, the textbooks and the teachers' guides are their primary teaching resources and if they are not available or do not provide adequate guidance then it may hinder the teaching of reading. In similar vein, the teachers also note the importance of access to books and support for reading at home. Indeed, available literature indicates that children who come from an environment where there are books and their parents have time to read, find

pleasure in reading because of the reading spirit they have acquired at home (Stewig, 1982). Davis, (1987) found that the availability of modern amenities and books at home have an effect on students' performance in Botswana. Twist, et al., (2006, p. 50), note that "children in England reported having among the most books at home and there was a clear association between number of books in the home and reading attainment".

The comments by some of the teachers that they would value further professional development indicate both a desire to improve professional practice and some uncertainty and lack of pedagogical confidence with the approaches to teaching reading recommended by the Botswana government. It is likely that their espousal of the role of phonics and the importance of comprehension as part of a pedagogy for reading is influenced by the syllabus requirements; however, further professional development may be necessary before such pedagogical approaches can be meaningfully embedded in classroom practice.



## CHAPTER SIX: INVESTIGATING CLASSROOM PRACTICES

### 6.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to provide an answer to the research question, “*What teaching strategies do teachers use to teach early reading in the second language?*” This question was answered through analysis of the data from classroom observations. The first observation was undertaken with ten participants who were all females. For the second round of observation, only six of the ten teachers agreed to be observed for a second time thus making the total number of observations sixteen. Therefore, this chapter presents the data related to the teaching behaviour of participants in the classroom.

The observation data presentation is organised around the teaching behaviours identified by instructional features that characterized participants’ practices in the classrooms observed. The features were adapted and some slightly modified to suit the research questions of the study from the research tool used by Madden & Almasi, (2006), *Transfer of knowledge from reading professional development to classroom practice*. There were initially thirty three observational behaviour features and they were reduced to eleven (See appendix 6). This is because I was interested in features relevant to this study and of relevance to teachers teaching lower standards in Botswana. The findings with regard to the classroom practices observed are presented and interpreted under the following major themes:

### 6.2 Teachers’ classroom practices

To explore teachers’ classroom practices, the study focused on the following four observational behaviours:

#### 6.2.1 The activation of prior knowledge

Linking new information to prior knowledge increases the learners’ ability to place information in a meaningful context by comparing it to already learnt information. The strategy also seems to arouse learners’ interest. Therefore, activating the learners’ prior knowledge of a specific topic helps them to comprehend the content of the topic at hand with much ease. The learners’ prior knowledge, which helped them to engage with text, was activated by singing songs and revising

the previous reading content. This linked to the new content to be taught while some activities were designed to arouse learners' interest in reading.

Peo activated learners' prior knowledge by asking them to sing a song giving names of the objects in the classroom while pointing at them. This was illustrated by the following extract:

Peo: Which song do you want to sing today?

Class: (All excited) English only (some of the learners) Point to the chalkboard (other learners).

Peo: Ok, which one do you like very much?

Class: (Talking aloud at the same time) Point to the chalkboard.

Peo: Class sing, Point to the chalkboard.

It was observed that Peo engaged the learners in deciding on the song of their choice, thus giving a relatively modest example of learner autonomy. She wanted to arouse their interest and also activate their prior knowledge of the names of the objects in the classroom that they learnt through the song. It was observed that there were some of the learners who had problems with pronunciation of some of the words. The teacher overlooked the problem because the learners were over powered by those who could sing and pronounce the words well. It is worth mentioning that it seemed that the teacher's strategy worked well for her. This is because the learners appeared to be interested and engaged in the lesson even those who had pronunciation problems during singing showed interest from the moment she started introducing the day's lesson. In this sense, what she said in the following extract in the preliminary interview reiterates her teaching strategy: *"Knowing children's background is also helpful because one will not find it difficult to cater for their different abilities."*

In another class, Phetso addressed the same exercise differently. She introduced the lesson by asking the learners to sing English only and the Alphabet songs. The extract below illustrates the point:

Phetso: Do you want to sing a song for our visitor?

Class: Yes, teacher.

Phetso: Let us sing English Only song.

Class: (Sang the song while she dusts the chalkboard).

Phetso: Good. Now let us sing the Alphabet song.

Phetso asked the learners if they wanted to sing a song for the visitor and it was expected that the song choice would be the learners' preference. It seemed that the teacher had already chosen songs that she wanted to be sung as the day's lesson was about letters of the alphabet. The other song was intended to activate their prior knowledge and arouse their interest because in the preliminary interview she mentioned that, *"If the children's background knowledge is built before engaging them in reading, then they might understand the text."* Therefore, the strategy was also meant to motivate them. While they were singing the first song the teacher did not monitor how they were pronouncing the words because at their level they recite the words without paying attention to the correct pronunciation and they need constant monitoring. If they are not monitored, it may lead to learners having difficulties in pronouncing the words across the curriculum.

In another class, Namune activated the learners' prior knowledge by asking them to tell what they did in the previous reading lesson before introducing new vocabulary. The following extract illustrates the point:

Namune: Who can tell the class what we did yesterday in the reading lesson? (Translates: Ke mang yo o ka re bolelelang gore re dirile eng maabane ka nako ya go bala?).

Bonang: We read about a snake.

Namune: Was it only about a snake? Lebang.

Lebang: No teacher. We read about a snake in a big river.

Namune asked the learners to recall what they did in the previous reading lesson and translated the question in Setswana to help them to understand better. Translation was done after noticing that only three learners had their hands up. It was observed that after the teacher translated the question; the learners raised their hands, thus justifying what she said in the preliminary interview: *"I translate to Setswana a lot to interpret some of the concepts because that is when they could comprehend the text better."* It was observed that the learner who responded to the

question responded well but the teacher did not acknowledge her initiative. This might demotivate learners as positive reinforcement boosts their self-esteem.

In Maru's class, she was seen drawing upon the learners' prior knowledge about the text by revising the words they read in the previous lesson. The strategy was applied in both of the lessons she was observed teaching. In the first lesson, Maru was observed teaching 'At the game reserve: Activity 2' and the following extract depicts how she approached the lesson:

Maru: Class, who can tell me any word that you remember from yesterday's lesson?

Thebe: Forest

Maru: Good. Class, Thebe remembers the word 'forest'. Which word do you remember, Lesedi?

Lesedi: Many trees.

Maru: Class, how many words did Lesedi say?

Class: Two

Maru: Class, please say only one word at a time so that others also participate in the lesson.

In recalling the words that they read the previous day, it was observed that the learners were able to remember a lot of words as they could even identify more than one word. This could have been also facilitated by the reading strategy that she mentioned during the preliminary interview in the following extract: *"We also have the method of drop and read to encourage our kids to read anything that they come across and share it with the class."* Even though she was interested in the words they could recall, it may have been essential to increase their awareness of the words by asking them to construct the sentences with the words to detect if their comprehension skills were really enhanced during the lesson.

### **6.2.2 The engagement of learners in the reading task**

Teachers' practices reflect different aspects of teaching strategies which engage learners in the reading task. For example, learners should be given adequate time to read before asking them oral questions and dictating spelling. This was observed in Masa's class, which validates her words from the preliminary interview: *"To check if they really comprehended, I ask them*

*questions and if they give correct answers, then I will know that they have comprehended.”* The following extract is an example of what was observed:

Masa: (Places a picture chart on the chalkboard). What can you see on the picture chart?

Could you please, raise your hands? Lesego.

Lesego: I can see a tree.

Masa: That is good. Class what else can you see? Matlho.

Matlho: I can see a big snake.

Masa: Good. We are going to read about Tangeni and the snake. Listen carefully as I read then read after me when I read for the second time. Baile, could you please read while the class read after you.

Baile: (Baile read and struggled to pronounce the word *roaring* and the teacher helped with the correct pronunciation of the word).

Masa: Class, what does the word *roaring* mean? (The new vocabulary identified as the learners read and they were unable to respond to the question. She explained the word. The teacher read and asked the learners to point at the sentence while she checked if they are correct. They were all engaged in reading for 30 minutes and she asked oral questions during the process. Her final activity was dictating spelling).

From the extract it is evident that the text read contained difficult or unfamiliar vocabulary, which could have been identified by the teacher before engaging learners in reading. It seems that familiarizing learners with the new vocabulary before reading provides experiences, which could build the learners' background knowledge of the text prior to reading to facilitate comprehension. Nonetheless, learners were able to answer questions satisfactorily and most of them wrote correct spelling of the words.

### **6.2.3 The teacher engages the learners in the construction of meaning from the text**

Reading strategies are important in construction of meaning. Changing strategies from teachers directed reading to engaging learners in reading more texts on their own or groups without the teacher's direct intervention is essential. This might inspire learners to use their existing knowledge to construct meaning from the text. The teachers observed approached reading by engaging learners in guided reading, reading in pairs/groups, reading aloud, choral, silent and as a class, and also translated to Setswana, which is a native language. There was also evidence of

social interaction and it acted as a source of motivation. Learners seemed to perform their reading tasks better when helped by their peers as there was not any feeling of anxiety.

In Masimo's class it was observed that she engaged learners in oral, choral and silent reading after listening to her reading. The activities observed in her class were validated by her words in the preliminary interview, *"I read for them while they are listening to act as a role model before they read."* The strategy seems appropriate as they could emulate good reading skills from the teacher and the following extract illustrates how she conducted her lesson:

Masimo: (Gave each group 2 copies of the textbook so that they share because the copies were not enough for each child). Class, listen while I read the story and then read after me when I read for the second time. On Saturday, there was a football match in our school. The Leopards played against Elephants. The people who came to watch the game were cheering and making a lot of noise. The referee was Mr Lopang. The goalkeeper for Elephants team was hurt on the head and was taken to the hospital. He was replaced by a new goalkeeper. The Leopard team won the game with two goals. (After the learners' have read, they were asked to form a reading chorus in their groups and read the story aloud in unison. Some were asked to read orally while others were listening before silent reading).

It was observed that the learners were struggling to pronounce some of the words like 'referee, cheering, and replaced' and it seemed that the teacher also needed to work on their decoding skills. Discussing and explaining the meaning of the new vocabulary is essential before reading because it could have smoothed the progress of reading and thus increasing comprehension. The strategy of choral reading might be good because it can be supportive and encouraging for the learners who are shy and struggling when reading. Therefore, for those feeling nervous when reading aloud in class, choral reading could provide support because they would be reading along with more fluent readers.

It is worth mentioning that shortage of textbooks is also a problem. If more than three learners are sharing a textbook, then it disadvantages them from constructing meaning from the text as they do not read at the same pace. This concurs with what she mentioned in the following extract from the preliminary interview, *"the greatest challenge is that we do not have enough teaching resources because pupils are still sharing textbooks."*

Besides making instructions easier for better understanding, most of the teachers provided instructions in Setswana when they felt that the learners were having problems understanding the instruction. The strategy appears to facilitate concept development and also aids comprehension. Below is an extract showing translation in Pelo's class:

Pelo: Three girls are holding different objects. What are they holding class? (Translation) *Ba tshotse eng?*

C: Lerato is holding a ruler.

Pelo: Very good. What is Peo holding?

C: Peo is holding a card.

Pelo: Good. Peo is holding a card written ABC. (Translation) *Peo o tshotse karata e e kwadilweng ABC*. Instruction: *Re ya go bua ka* letters of the alphabet. (Code switching) (We are going to talk about letters of the alphabet).

The activity was based on interaction to draw upon the learners' knowledge and make it a topic for discussion as it was revealed after the learner's response. The teacher resorted to translation even if it was not necessary. It also seemed that the learners were able to respond to the questions because they were able to disclose what Lerato and Peo were holding. They produced correct and comprehensive sentences thus providing evidence that they understood the instructions.

To engage learners in construction of meaning from the text, Maru first explained the meaning of words, which she felt were difficult and might reduce the chances of the learners comprehending the text. The following extract is an example of what was observed:

Maru: Who can read one word on the chalkboard? Kagiso.

Kagiso: Canoe.

Maru: Good boy. What is the meaning of the word canoe?

Sebaga: A boat.

Maru: Good. What kind of a boat is a canoe? (No answer). It is a small boat that you row using a paddle. Who can come and point to a canoe from the picture chart? Lesedi.

Lesedi: (Points to the canoe).

Maru: Good girl. The man is using a paddle to row the canoe. Class say *paddle*.

It was observed that the vocabulary used in the lesson was not familiar to the learners. There is also possibility that most of the learners might have not seen a boat or a canoe depicted in pictures. It seemed that it is essential for ESL learners to be exposed to the meaning of new vocabulary in order to facilitate comprehension as it was observed in Maru's class. To reinforce the strategy, learners were asked to check the meaning of the words; 'canoe, boat and paddle' in their dictionaries. However, making them aware of the phonetic alphabet in the dictionary could also have helped in decoding of the words. They were also asked to read in pairs before reading in groups and all this was done to help learners to construct meaning from the text. This verifies Maru's response from the preliminary interview when saying: *"I select vocabulary words from the text that I feel will be difficult and explain the meaning of the words before reading."* It seems that this is a good strategy because lack of vocabulary knowledge hinders reading comprehension.

For the second observation in Pelo's class, learners were provided with picture dictionaries because the lesson was about finding the meaning of the words from the dictionary and the following extract illustrates the activity:

Pelo: Today you are going to learn how to use a dictionary to find meaning of words (Translates). Do you all know a dictionary?

C: Yes, teacher. (Not all learners responded).

Pelo: (Wrote the words 'axe, basin, clouds, generator, grocery, boat, nest, snake, picture and village' on the chalkboard and read the words while the learners read after her. After reading she distributed few dictionaries to the learners to share). Class find the words in your dictionaries and raise your hands if you have found the word to tell the class the meaning of the word.

The teacher was teaching learners how to use the picture dictionary to find meaning of selected words and the picture-word association strategy facilitated comprehension. The dictionaries used were for standards 1 and 2 because there were no dictionaries for standard 3, which validates what she said in the preliminary interview: *"There are no reading posters because they were useful in the sense that they illustrated the content in the text books."* Instead of dictionaries she could have used the posters as they have clear pictures and words. It was observed that the



teacher did not check if the selected vocabulary was included in the dictionary before the lesson. She was alerted by the learners that they could not find two words (village and generator) from the dictionary because it was not for the taught standard.

It seems that Pelo's teaching strategy enhanced the learners' decoding and spelling skills. This is because most of the learners were able to write words correctly during the spelling activity. Moreover, explanation was given in Setswana if she felt that they did not understand the instruction. Nonetheless, learners also need to be taught how to use the dictionary's phonetic spellings to arrive at accurate pronunciations of words, which contradicts with what she said in the following extract from the preliminary interview: *"I use the phonic method because I want them to understand the letter-sound relationship in order to pave way for reading words."*

Masa used picture reading, gestures and repetition of sentences to engage learners in the construction of meaning from the text. They were asked to look at the pictures from their textbooks and to tell anything that they saw. The following extract illustrates what transpired in Masa's class:

Masa: I am tall. (Showing them what she meant) Class, who is also tall in the class?

Loeto: Kago is tall in the class.

Masa: Good. Class, repeat the sentence after me. Kago is tall in the class.

Class: Kago is tall in the class.

Masa: (Assists them to open the correct page. Learners' instructed to look at the pictures while she asked them questions about the pictures). Kagiso, who is big?

Kagiso: Tumelo is big.

Masa: Well done. Class say: Tumelo is big. (The learners' repeat the sentence). Class, point to the picture of Tumelo. What is she wearing? Thuto.

Thuto: She is wearing a red dress.

Masa: Good. Class, repeat the sentence (Continues with the activity following the same pattern).

Masa was observed using gestures to make instructions easier for the learners to avoid translating to the native language, which worked well for her because the learners were fully engaged in the lesson. It seems that even the repetition of the sentences assisted the learners to recognize the

words and thus, making their comprehension much easier. This signifies that different kinds of teaching strategies are needed to facilitate reading comprehension and this concurs with what she said in the preliminary interview: *“I really have to understand my pupils because some of them are fast; some slow and the most important thing is to know how to cater for both of them because of their individual differences.”*

#### **6.2.4 The teacher gives the learners adequate time to engage in authentic reading tasks**

For learners to develop communicative competence in reading, classroom reading activities must resemble real life reading tasks that involve meaningful communication. The material that they read should be designed in way that could be used in other contexts outside the classroom and having adequate time is important. Matlho was observed using the approach that created a learning environment, where reading created a link between home and the school. This is because learners’ wrote birthday messages and exchanged them in class. She was observed saying:

Matlho: Who can tell me when he/she was born? Lerato.

Lerato: I was born on the 11<sup>th</sup> of January 1999.

Matlho: Good. What happens during your birthday? Teacher translated in Setswana.

Lerato: My family gives me presents.

Matlho: Good. What else do we receive during our birthdays? (Translates) Gamme.

Gamme: I receive birthday cards from my family and friends.

Matlho: Good. Class, say the sentence after Gamme.

Class: I receive birthday cards from my family and friends.

Matlho: Today we are going to learn about a birthday card.

The content of the lesson was related to what happens in their daily lives, which was observed to be of interest to the learners as they were actively engaged in the lesson. In the above sense, Matlho tended to contextualise the language input through information gap questions. She drew upon learners’ background information to lead them to the topic for the lesson, which is validated by the following statement from the preliminary interview: *“The teacher should do pre-reading activities to activate children’s prior knowledge of the words used in the text.”* To

make the task authentic, learners had to create birthday cards with messages to their friends and these were shared in the class, which was authentic and facilitated their comprehension skills.

### **6.3 The role of the teacher in the teaching of reading**

The role of the teacher in the teaching of reading was studied through the following three observed behaviours:

#### **6.3.1 The teacher engages the learners in the development of phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency through a variety of authentic literacy opportunities, models and demonstrations**

The purpose of phonics and other decoding strategies is to create additional means for improving decoding and providing word attack strategy when approaching unknown words to facilitate reading. Identifying letters is part of the task of learning letter phoneme association and therefore alphabet knowledge seems to facilitate phoneme awareness. It is important for beginners because it requires them to be aware of the sounds that the letters present.

Teachers developed learners' phonemic awareness through systematic instruction on sound-letter relationships; developing alphabetic awareness and introducing CVC words. It was observed that the phonics method, which relies on teaching of letters and sounds, is mostly used in standard two classes because it is the foundation phase for reading. However, it seemed that teachers were still not pedagogically confident in teaching phonics as they use letter names. Following is an example of strategies that the participants used when teaching phonics during a reading lesson. Metsi was observed during her first observation conducting the following reading lesson:

Metsi: Pointing to the picture chart, who can tell me the name of this picture?

Gamme: Dog

Metsi: Good. Class say, dog.

Class: Dog

Metsi: What letter does the word *dog* begin with class?

Class: Letter D

Metsi: Good. Does anyone see another picture that begins with letter *d*? Lerato.

Lerato: *Desk*.

Metsi: Good. Class say *desk*.

C: Desk.

Metsi: Can you all hear that the words begin with the same sound?

Although Metsi's activities appeared to be designed to develop alphabetic awareness (Letter D) she did not explicitly draw out the phonemic awareness of the sound 'duh'. She talks about 'letter' three times and draws the learners' attention to take note that the words identified all begin with the same sound. In the above activity, the teacher is giving instructions that would help learners to perceive the small units of sound that make up spoken words. During the preliminary interview, she mentioned that: *"Teaching the children letter-sound relationship helps them to learn how to pronounce words and read sentences with confidence."* It seems that phonemic segmentation is particularly difficult for those with little prior experience of listening to English speech sounds and this was observed in a standard two class. Learners were asked to construct their own words using the same letter and they came up with the following words: *day, duster, door, dress, doll, doctor, dad, dam, dance and dark.*

In another class, Peo addressed the lesson differently. She taught vocabulary in a contextualized manner through examples without resorting to Setswana and through using simple language for learners to get the gist of the lesson. In that class, more learner participation was observed and the following extract is an illustration of what transpired in the class:

Peo: (Holding up the Learners' book the teacher pointed to the picture of an ant). What is this class? *Lame.*

Lame: **This is** an ant.

Peo: Well done. (The teacher followed the same procedure for pictures of 'bed', 'cat' and 'dog'. Learners' asked to say the words after the teacher. Instructed to get into pairs and practice reading the words while the teacher goes around checking their pronunciation).

Peo: Class, listen to the sounds that I will make /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, /u/. These are the sounds of the vowels in the alphabet. Repeat the sounds after me. (The teacher produces the sounds).

Class: /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, /u/.

Peo: Well done. Say /a/ is for 'ant'. (The teacher followed the same procedure for /e/ is for 'bed', /o/ is for 'dog', /i/ is for 'pin' and /u/ is for 'cup' while they repeated after her).

The teacher was observed introducing CVC words by starting with the short vowel sounds and engaging them in pronouncing CVC words containing short vowel sounds. This was done after

she was satisfied that the learners knew how to read the words as that is when she asked them to listen to the sounds that she produces from the vowels. Even though during the preliminary interview, she mentioned that: *“Teaching phonics is a challenge for me and I struggle when I teach children,”* it was observed that she engaged the learners in the lesson. The focus of the lesson was to teach the learners short vowel sounds ‘a e i o u’. They practiced and produced the sounds after her while emphasizing the short vowel sounds that made up the words they read during picture reading. It was observed that Lame was not corrected when he said, ‘*This is an ant*’ instead of ‘*That is an ant*’ because he was pointing to what the teacher was showing them. Even though the main focus of the lesson was introducing the CVC words, it seemed that there is a need to know how to construct correct sentences.

Phetso started her lesson by engaging the learners in identifying letters and letter sounds. The following extract is an example of what was observed:

Phetso: Class, I want you to read letters A-Z and the sound produced by each letter from the chart while I point to each letter (Phetso points while they read). Who can come and pick any letter card, identify the letter and produce the letter sound. Pule.

Pule: ‘a’ /a/.

Phetso: Good boy, class repeat after him.

Class: ‘a’ /a/

Phetso: Good. Loeto

Loeto: ‘b’ /b/ (Produces the Setswana sound).

Phetso: Good try, is the sound correct? Who can help Loeto?

Lesedi: /b/ (She produces the correct sound. Phetso continues the activity for all the letter cards).

The teaching focus was that learners had to identify the printed alphabets from the letter cards and produce their proper sounds. She also pointed to the letters in the chart as they named them, providing opportunities for building letter-sound identification and the strategy reiterates what she said during the preliminary interview: *“The teacher should also be creative because pupils need a variety of activities so that they become interested in reading.”*

It seemed that learners like Loeto were still finding it difficult to produce the phonics sounds as they were still only familiar with letter sounds from Breakthrough to Setswana in standard 1. Therefore, it seems that Phetso was compelled to use different strategies that could enhance learners' phonics skills.

### **6.3.2 The teacher arranges schedule to provide extra time for struggling readers**

Struggling readers learn in different ways and they can make progress in their reading abilities when they are taught by informed and committed teachers. Not only could learners benefit from reading in different ways, they also benefit from different groupings as they assist each other. Some of the activities observed during the lesson were engaging learners in peer and group work activities.

It was observed in Metsi's class that extra time was not scheduled for few struggling readers even though they were assisted during the lesson. The assistance they got during the lesson was not enough because they needed time where they could do activities that are suitable for their learning styles and needs. The following extract illustrates the point:

Metsi: In groups construct sentences using the following words: 'new, big, tall, small, old, beautiful, short, black, white and ugly'. (Metsi moved around helping the groups and marking their work). Leungo, read the second sentence.

Leungo: I see a big *women*. (Leungo struggles to read the sentence).

Metsi: You have not read all the word. Point to each word as you read them. (She spent time helping her to read the words correctly as the sentence was 'I can see a big woman').

Metsi was observed assisting Leungo because she was struggling to comprehend the sentence. During the preliminary interview, she mentioned that: *"Individualized reading aloud is good because that is when the teacher could detect their reading problems and assist them."* Therefore, Leungo was asked to point to individual words while reading and it seems that reading words in isolation was not helpful as the learner did not comprehend the text in context. Metsi also spent a considerable time assisting Leungo while there were other learners who needed help. It was observed that others were also struggling to read and were being helped by

other learners. This is an indication that extra time is essential because that is when the teacher can address individual reading difficulties in a smaller number rather than the whole class.

### **6.3.3 The teacher used on-going assessments (formal and informal) to inform and change their daily instruction, specifically to meet individual needs**

Assessment is essential as it shows the areas where learners have weaknesses and strengths in comprehending the given text. Teachers base instruction on what proves to be effective in their teaching and to eliminate the parts that are ineffective. If a class performs poorly when assessed, that means either that the instruction was not effective or that the form of assessment used does not correspond with the way the lesson was taught. In either case, the teacher must make the necessary adjustments so that the learners could understand the content thoroughly. Besides informal assessment, formal assessment was done once a month and these were carried out by the whole school. Each standard wrote the same set of questions and teachers were not observed during this activity.

Informal assessment done by individual teachers to check if learners comprehended the text was in forms of dictating spelling, oral or written activities and reading aloud. Phetso engaged the learners in different activities and the following extract is an example of what was observed:

Phetso: You are now going to use the consonants and vowels written on the chalkboard to write three letter words. The vowel should be in the middle as we have been doing. (As learners were doing the activity, she moved around helping and marking their work).

Phetso: Stop writing and tell me the words that you have written. Tshepo.

Tshepo: *Mat*.

Phetso: Very good Tshepo. You can see that the vowel is in the middle. Lesedi.

Lesedi: *Cup*.

Phetso: Very good Lesedi. (The following words were written by the learners: rub, cat, cow, pot, lid, hat, sit, toy, dog, rat, fur, rib, pen, key, box etc.).

The teaching focus is CVC words and the teacher reminded the class that the vowel should be in the middle. But her informal assessment is a visual check that they have written a CVC word; however, she does not know if Tshepo or Lesedi can identify the vowel or its sound. CVC words

are considered the starting point of phonics instruction. It seems that the teacher also wanted to check if the learners were able to read the words they had written correctly. Significantly, she integrated the four language skills during the lesson.

Thobo engaged learners in an informal assessment as they were asked to write answers to 4 questions. The whole class did not finish this task because they were not given enough time to write the answers to the questions. The teacher did not even have time to move around to check if they were doing the activity hence she was not sure if they really answered the questions. The following extract illustrates the point:

Thobo: Look very carefully in the map and write the answers to the questions that I am going to write on the chalkboard. (Teacher writes the questions while they start to write answers to the questions. The teacher does not move around to assist and mark the work of the learners and when they had just started, they were told to get ready for the next lesson).

It was observed that the learners were not fully engaged in the lesson as they were not observed doing any reading task. There was no evidence that even the questions that they had to answer were answered correctly as they were asked to stop writing and to prepare themselves for the next lesson when they had just started writing. The lesson took 30 minutes instead of 1 hour. It can be strongly argued that Thobo's classroom instructional behaviour was to develop the speaking and writing skills rather than the reading skill.

#### **6.4 Teachers' teaching strategies for comprehension**

To understand the teaching strategies for comprehension that the teachers used, the researcher focused on the following three observed behaviors:

##### **6.4.1 The teacher engages learners in learning how to use comprehension strategies through modelling, guided practice and independent practice**

Guided reading is seen as an activity that develops and encourages learners' response and reflection throughout their reading experiences. It is expected that the abilities and knowledge the learners have acquired from guided reading experiences then, might ultimately be transferred to independent reading especially if the teachers are encouraging them.



Namune read the text to model good pronunciation skills while the learners read after her. To reinforce the skill already displayed by the teacher, some of the learners were asked to do guided reading while the class read after them, before they were asked to do independent reading. The strategies concur with what she mentioned in the following extract from the preliminary interview: *“The strategies that I use when teaching reading include engaging learners in guided, independent and reading aloud.”* After discussing new vocabulary with the learners, the following was observed in Namune’s lesson:

Namune: I am going to read the text and you must listen carefully and observe how punctuations and pronounce the words. (After reading, learners were asked to read after the teacher. Sebaga was asked to read while the class read after her. Few learners did the activity before engaging them to read aloud individually while the teacher helped if necessary. They all had a chance to read and the teacher helped them with pronunciation and punctuation problems).

Though learners were able to read at their own pace with little or no help from the teacher, it was observed that when they were given a writing activity, ten out of thirty four struggled to write correct answers to the questions constructively. This might be because they had difficulties in decoding the text. It also seemed that they needed more practice in comprehension strategies, which should be tailored towards their different reading abilities. However, such catering did not take place in the observed lesson, as learners of different reading levels did the same written task regardless of the variation in their reading abilities.

#### **6.4.2 The teacher engages the learners in instruction to develop word recognition strategies**

Phonological awareness and rapid naming of what is read contribute to word recognition performance. If teachers expose learners to activities where their teaching focuses on decoding of individual letters and words, it could enhance learners’ automatic word recognition skills. In lower standards, it is effective for the teacher to point to the words as she reads and move from left to right across the page thereby providing a model of good pronunciation skills for the learners. This is a good strategy because letter-sound association increases learners’ automaticity of word recognition.

Peo was observed engaging learners in matching and un-matching of the word cards from the chalkboard while reading. The activity enhanced word recognition skills as they also read the words while matching. After matching and un-matching the words, they were asked to pick any word card and match it with the picture on the chalkboard while they read the word for the class. The following extract is an example of what was observed in her class:

Peo: Good. (After they have identified five words; school, girl, boy, shirt and dress, they were asked to read the word cards on the chalkboard). Look at the word cards pasted on the chalkboard. Who can read any word from the chalkboard? Katso.

Katso: School.

Peo: Good boy. Now who can come and pick a word card written *school*, reads it

first while the class read after and match it with the word on the chalkboard?

Phenyo.

Phenyo: (Picks the wrong word card and could not read the word).

Peo: Katso come and help Phenyo to pick the correct word card. (Katso helps Phenyo and they read the word together followed by the whole class. Phenyo matches the word card with the word on the chalkboard). The activity continues until they can all match and un-match the words with the word cards before dictating spelling.

It seems that the learners were able to recognize and pronounce given words as they matched words on flash cards to those on the chalkboard. This tended to assist during the spelling activity as most learners wrote correct words. This reiterates her comment on the following extract from the preliminary interview: *“In post reading, pupils should do the activities that test if they have understood the text read in different ways suitable for the level of the pupils.”* Moreover, the activities were done in a way that there was evidence of boosting learners self-confidence and co-operation skills as they interacted with peers and helped each other during reading, which also facilitated their word recognition skills.

### **6.4.3 The teacher values the learners' understanding of print**

Valuing learners understanding of print is essential in reading because it motivates and gives them self-direction and self-motivation. In a way, it was seen to provide a base for successful reading development. Almost all the teachers provided their learners with positive feedback for any attempt they made while reading except in Thobo's class, which contradicts with her comment from the preliminary interview: "*A good teacher of reading should also acknowledge pupils responses*". Pelo was observed showing appreciation for the learners' effort by saying, 'very good' while Masa used the words 'well done' and 'that is good'. Phetso was also observed saying 'good try'. For Namune, it was not consistent because in some instances she forgot to provide learners with positive reinforcement.

### **6.5 The role of Pre-service training**

The role of pre-service training in the teaching and learning of reading was understood by observing whether the teachers planned and implemented instructions corresponding to the curriculum and teachers guide

#### **6.5.1 The teacher plans and implements instruction that corresponds to the curriculum and teachers guides**

It was observed that the objectives covered were all from the syllabus and the content taught by all the teachers corresponded with the content in the teachers' guide and learners' textbooks. A point is worth mentioning that the curriculum of Botswana is structured around the four language skills and the content to be taught under each objective in the syllabus is outlined in the teacher's guides. This also corresponds with what the teachers indicated in the preliminary interview as most of them mentioned that: "*Covering the syllabus objectives is essential as teaching is examination oriented.*" Therefore, teachers follow a systematic curriculum in their teaching and this was evident in all the classes that were observed.

### **6.6 Conclusion**

The interviews with teachers indicated that they believe vocabulary knowledge is important in learning to read as it facilitates comprehension. Cain et al., (2009) advocate that it is important for the learners to know the vocabulary of the read text because vocabulary knowledge will

promote comprehension. This is an indication that vocabulary knowledge is important in reading comprehension. Likewise Laufer, (1997) argues that “no text comprehension is possible, either in one’s native language or in a foreign language, without understanding the text’s vocabulary” (p. 20). The classroom observations indicated that vocabulary problems were indeed a major hindrance to reading comprehension. This concurs with the results of the study by Cain et al., (2009) that revealed that learners who had “weak reading comprehension skills were less able to infer the meanings of novel vocabulary items from context than were their skilled peers” (p. 59). This is because some of the learners were able to decode the sentence without comprehension or decode words and produce the appropriate sounds without extracting or constructing meaning from the read text. In the observations and analysis above, it is evident how many of the activities relate to teaching children the meanings of words. Activities whose pedagogical focus was ostensibly activating prior knowledge, or constructing meaning from text frequently focused almost exclusively on word-level vocabulary issues, rather than on sentence or text level meaning-making. Meaning-making is thus constructed as solely about the meaning of words, rather than overall meaning of texts.

The observation analysis suggests that these teachers may lack pedagogical confidence in supporting learners in generating meaning from text. There were limited examples of teachers drawing upon learners’ own experiences in order to interpret the text. Learners were not given a chance to pose questions, which could have helped them to explore the text or express their learning concerns. Equally, there were few examples of learners being asked to make a personal response to a text. This is in agreement with the study carried in Botswana Primary Schools by Arthur, (1998, p. 10) that revealed that “teachers avoid challenges, for example in the form of pupils questions, which they may not be able to respond to”. There was little evidence that teachers understood how context could provide a useful support for determining the meaning of unknown words and how reading carefully at sentence or text level might help with understanding new words. Even though the teachers talked of the value of independent reading, very few used the strategy. The strategy might have provided opportunities for learners to engage in sustained silent reading, which might develop their comprehension skills.

The new emphasis on phonics instruction reflected in the Botswana curriculum was evident both in the interviews and the observations. Teachers understood theoretically the importance of phonics and knew some phonics strategies, such as working with CVC words and identifying sounds. The observations did provide evidence of teachers deploying these strategies. However, it was evident that the teachers are not fully pedagogically confident with phonics approaches to the teaching of reading as their repertoire of phonics strategies is limited and there was a tendency to use letter names rather than letter sounds during teaching.

In the following chapter, I shall focus on pedagogical subject knowledge of the three case studies and their classroom practices.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: TEACHERS' PEDAGOGICAL SUBJECT KNOWLEDGE AND CLASSROOM PRACTICES: CASE STUDIES

### 7.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I will present case studies of three teachers in order to explore how pedagogical subject knowledge and classroom practice in the teaching of reading are realised in three individual cases. In this way, a richer, more in-depth understanding of the research questions is offered, complementing the cross-participant analysis of the interviews and classroom observations. In the case studies, the classroom behaviours of the teachers are matched against their espoused pedagogical subject knowledge as revealed in their interviews, and with their introspective commentaries on them in the stimulated recall interview meetings. The criterion for selecting the three participants is that of their different backgrounds in their teaching qualifications, which was observed to have an influence in their pedagogical subject knowledge and classroom practices.

### 7.1 The three case studies and their classroom practices

The case study profiles in this chapter present a variety of teaching experience practices, school location and qualifications. A snapshot profile of the case studies is presented in the table below:

Case pseudonym	Gender	Qualifications	Teaching experience	School location
Thobo	Female	PTTC (Primary Teachers' Teaching Certificate)	13	Rural
Phetso	Female	BA (Bachelor of Arts in Humanities)	2	Urban
Namune	Female	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• PTTC</li><li>• DPE (Diploma in Primary Education specialising in Special Education)</li></ul>	22	Rural

**Table 7.1: Profile of the three participants**

## **7.2 Presentation of the data**

The analysis of the preliminary semi-structured interviews with the ten teachers focussed upon the three themes directed by the research question, which were:

1. Teachers' pedagogical subject knowledge in teaching reading
2. Teachers' pedagogical practices in teaching reading
3. The challenges that the teachers face when teaching reading

Therefore, in this chapter, I will organise the data presentation around the same three themes when presenting the three case studies. The espoused behaviours for every teacher are thematically discussed. They are sometimes matched and associated by teachers' commentaries, which help to explain the features of the teachers' pedagogical knowledge and classroom practice in the teaching of reading.

### **7.2.1 Case study 1**

Namune was interviewed before the classroom observation and after the observation. As a teacher who obtained PTTC and DPE, it was anticipated that ideally, her class practice would address the learners' individual differences and needs with a planned systematically monitored arrangement of teaching procedures in her classroom practice. This was not observed during the classroom practice as she maintained that their teaching is examination oriented. Therefore, if she caters for their individual needs, it will delay her from covering the syllabus objectives. The technique of trying to ask the learners to come after school for remedial lessons was also futile as they do not turn up. Therefore, the only alternative solution was to resort to methods that could make their learning easier as highlighted in the following commentaries.

### **7.2.2 Teachers' pedagogical subject knowledge and practice of teaching reading**

Namune highlighted a number of different reading methods/strategies to facilitate active learner participation in reading. She used a variety of procedures to ensure that all learners had an opportunity to contribute in the reading activity. This does not imply that one procedure is more successful than another in captivating the learners' attention, but that the teacher succeeds in

conveying her determination that they participate. The following extract illustrates some of the strategies that Namune emphasized to be using:

“The methods/strategies that I use when teaching reading include engaging learners in guided, independent reading and reading aloud before they do silent reading and also picture reading.” **(Preliminary semi-structured interview).**

The teacher displayed a form of conviction that learners’ contribution in reading is essential to the teaching–learning process as they all see themselves as readers. Her classroom task included building learners’ confidence. This is done by engaging them in different reading strategies and giving them enough time in reading aloud activity, where every learner is given a chance to read. The following reading activity seemed to tally with what she stated during the preliminary semi-structured interview in the extract below:

Namune: I am going to read the text and you must listen carefully and observe how I pronounce the words and observe punctuations. (The teacher reads while the learners are listening. After reading, they were asked to read after the teacher. Sebaga was asked to read while they read after her while the teacher checked if she was pronouncing the words correctly and observing punctuations).

Sebaga: (Reads). The snake was big and lived in a river, which the people in the village fetched water from. (Did not observe the full stop punctuation) The people in the village were afraid of the snake.

Namune: Sebaga, observe the full stop punctuation. (Sebaga reads and observes the full stop. Few learners were also asked to read while the class read after them before engaging those who did not read to read aloud while the teacher helped if necessary with pronunciation and punctuation problems) **(Classroom observation).**

The episode, which the learners took in turns to read aloud occupied a significant part of the potential time allocated to the lesson because the teacher wanted every learner to participate in the activity. During the reading episode, the teacher focussed much in how the learners



pronounced words and whether they observed punctuations. In the stimulated recall interview, when Namune was asked about the reading strategy that she used, her comment was as follows:

“Listening to each learner reading aloud is important. This is because the teacher can observe if the learner pronounces the words well as they are still in a crucial stage of having problems in pronunciation and observing punctuations. I have realised that after helping them with punctuations, they read the text observing them even though there are few learners still lagging behind, but they will improve with time.” **(Stimulated recall interview).**

In the interview the teacher held the view of teaching reading as a strongly interactive process dependent on the contributions of both the teacher and the learners because reading is a collaborative activity. It seems that for her, reading fluently is a pre-requisite in her teaching of reading as she focussed much in observing pronunciation and punctuations and this reflects in the following extract:

“Most of the times, I read while they listen or they read after me because I feel that modelling good reading behaviour might help them to pronounce words and use punctuations. I also have to act as a facilitator while they continue with their tasks because that is how one can test their comprehension level and skills.” **(Preliminary semi-structured interview).**

Namune started the lesson by asking the learners the vocabulary of the previous reading lesson as an introduction of the lesson. This was done to activate their prior knowledge of the text they read because it was a continuation of the same text as shown in the following extract:

Namune: What did we say the word *prey* mean? Class.

Bonang: Catching an animal to eat.

Namune: Very good. Who can give us an example? Lebang.

Lebang: The snakes hunt and kill frogs for food.

Namune: Very good. Class say the sentence aloud **(Classroom observation).**

Scaffolding of the few words that were found to have been difficult in the exercise that they did the previous day was an indication of revision with the hope that the strategy will enhance the

learners' comprehension skills. Furthermore, it seems that the strategy used was to compensate for those with reading difficulties and could not have comprehended the text as expected. Namune gave the following reason for the strategy that she used:

“Discussing the words that I felt were difficult in their previous exercise is essential. This is because it might enhance their comprehension of the text better, even though for other learners, it is repetition and might find unnecessary. This is a strategy that I use to cater for those who find reading a challenge for them.”

**(Stimulated recall interview).**

It is clear that in the classroom interactions, she focussed much in encouraging learners to read accurately. This is because she focussed much on pronunciation and punctuations rather than uncovering the meaning of the text, which could have promoted their comprehension skill.

The teacher gauged the success of her reading lesson by the responses of the learners, the quality of the written work they produced and the relationship established in the process of reading. The teacher said:

“Most learners' were able to read. I have slow learners but it is not easy to know who they are because when they speak and read you will not know that they are slow learners until they write.” **(Stimulated recall interview).**

As far as the classroom management is concerned, the teacher managed the class. She instructed the learners from the front and also moved around the class. She assisted and marked their work in their groups. During one of the post interview sessions Namune explained why she did move around the class. She gave two reasons, which one is social and the other instructional.

“When they write they take much longer time and because I want them to complete what they are writing I make sure that I move around in their groups and help them. I explain difficult tasks and mark their work so that I can be satisfied that all the pupils have done their work. I am also still trying to interact with them socially.” **(Stimulated recall interview).**

### 7.2.3 The challenges that the teachers face when teaching reading

Namune felt that some of the learners' lacked confidence to participate in class due to what happened to them before in attempting to participate in class and she gave the following reason:

“Sometimes learners are feeling inferior or have low self-esteem and tend not to participate in the class activities. Some of the learners keep quite because they have a feeling that if they make a mistake, then others will laugh at them and it is the responsibility of the teacher to educate the learners that ridiculing others is not allowed in the class.” **(Preliminary semi-structured interview).**

She felt that a common technique of making learners to participate in reading is for the teacher to ask them to read and then to select a volunteer from those learners who have raised their hands. Another frequent technique is for the teacher to ask a question and then direct it to a specific learner by name. In an example that follows, Namune was seen to be directing the question to those in the class who have not raised their hands by calling each by name and it illustrated by the following extract:

Namune: Class, I want to see everyone raising their hands. If you do not raise your hand I will just call your name because I know that you know the answers.

Botlhe, (His hand is not raised) it is your turn now. **(Classroom observation).**

Botlhe's response was correct and this tallied with her comment from the interview. Although it could not be fair to nominate the learner who might fail to respond and get embarrassed, it seems that giving them the opportunity to participate helped them to come out of their shells. For those who shield behind others even though they know the answers, the strategy was boosting their confidence and she gave the following comment:

“I feel that some of the learners in the class are not eager to participate and do not raise their hands when they are asked to read or answer a question even if they know the answer. I have adopted a technique of asking even those whose hands are not raised because I feel that they shield behind others.” **(Stimulated recall interview).**

Learners were asked to do an activity to check if they comprehended the read text. It was observed that they were asked to answer the same questions in regardless of their individual reading needs and this reflected in the following extract:

Namune: (Pastes a chart on the chalkboard). Class; look at the chart because these are the five questions that you are going to answer in your exercise books (Translates in Setswana). Who can read the questions for us? Nonofu.

Nonofu: (Reads the questions fluently).

Namune: Very good girl. Class, write the date and answer the questions using complete sentences and please observe punctuations and avoid spelling mistakes (Translates in Setswana). (The teacher moves around the class to help learners and marks their work). (**Classroom observation**).

Most of the learners' reading abilities were observed to be fairly good but when they were given the writing task, it was discovered that some found it difficult to answer the questions. This indicated that their comprehension and decoding skills were not well developed. She gave the following comment:

"I did not cater for individual needs because it will delay me in covering the syllabus objectives and therefore, they have to write the same exercise. There is not enough time to prepare individualized work for their special needs. I always try to give instruction in Setswana if I feel that they do not understand with the hope that their individual needs will be met." (**Stimulated recall interview**).

When there is no direct equivalence in the learners' native language of the words being used in the read text, there is high potential for interference in the construction of meaning. Namune found it useful to translate into Setswana when it is apparent that none of the learners have grasped the essence of the meaning of the words in the text. Namune commented on the issue of translation as follows:

"I translate to Setswana a lot to interpret some of the concepts because that is when they could comprehend the text better. Our children have the knowledge

but the background that they come from is really a disadvantage and that is why most of them lag behind in reading.” **(Preliminary semi-structured interview).**

Giving explanation of the difficult vocabulary in Setswana helps learners to know the meaning of words before reading the text and it also aids comprehension. It appeared to have the potential for facilitating concept development as well as increasing learner’s participation in reading. This is seen in the lesson extract below:

Namune: What is the meaning of the word ‘prey’?

Class: No response

Namune: (Gives an explanation in Setswana).What do you think are snakes’ prey?

Maatla: The snakes eat (pause) frogs and insects.

Namune: Good boy, Maatla. The snakes’ prey is frogs and insects. Class, repeat the sentence after me. **(Classroom observation).**

The use of wait time for the learner to complete the sentence was observed. She also corrected Maatla indirectly. It seemed that she did not want him to feel that his response is dismissed as she is still working on their self-confidence. It appeared that Namune’s use of praise when the learners have attempted or answered the question was not consistent as it was not done for all the learners. Her comment of lack of habitual praise was:

“It would be good for me to remember to provide the learners with positive feedback because it is designed to reinforce the development of confidence in reading and class participation.” **(Stimulated recall interview).**

#### **7.2.4 Comment**

Namune’s aim seemed to develop the learners’ accuracy and literal comprehension through listening to them reading aloud and focussing on correcting their pronunciation and punctuation skills. It seemed that if they could have read silently, they could have focused more on the meanings and connections within the text rather than on pronunciation of words. However, she employed the methods she mentioned during the interview as activities were varied.

The questioning skill was managed carefully as questions were usually open to the whole class rather than a single nominated learner. Repetition was avoided through the use of explanations. She also encouraged the learners to be precise in their answers and mostly refrained from directly rephrasing them herself. This is because she did not want the learners to think that their answers were not appreciated as it might de-motivate them. There was an evidence of the use of wait time to encourage deeper thinking rather than intervention so that the learner could have enough time to complete the sentence or rephrases the answer before being corrected by fluent readers. Even though, she focussed much on fluency rather than on comprehension skill, learners were engaged on the lesson as they all had a chance to read and answer written questions.

### **7.3 Case study 2**

Phetso is not trained to teach in primary schools as her profession is to teach in secondary schools. Therefore, it was expected that she might not have the expertise of handling young learners especially in lower primary as she has not been exposed to pedagogical knowledge and practices of teaching reading to learners in primary schools. It was observed that her pedagogical knowledge and practices of teaching reading fared much better with her counterparts whose profession is to teach in primary education.

#### **7.3.1 Teacher's pedagogical subject knowledge and practice in teaching reading**

The following extract shows the techniques that she employs when teaching phonics in her standard 2 class:

“I start with letters of the alphabet and then teach the learners how to produce the sounds that are attached to the letters, which is the beginning phase of phonics reading. After completing all the alphabets and are able to produce the letter sounds, then they can combine the letter sounds and make up words and start to read. **(Preliminary semi-structured interview).**”

She was observed teaching phonics. For someone who was not trained as a primary school teacher and only got all the instructional practice from in-service training, it was really impressive. I could detect her enthusiasm as she carried out the lesson throughout to the end. It also tallied with what she said in the preliminary interview. She displayed her attributes very

well and it showed that she was committed to her work as she mentioned in the following extract:

“The teacher of reading should be trained. She should also possess certain skills as patience is very important because children need someone who is patient and who loves them. **(Preliminary semi-structured interview).**

She mentioned that it is the teacher’s responsibility to diagnose learners’ prior knowledge. This is because it helps the teacher to cater for their learning differences as it is declared in the following extract:

“Knowing the learners background knowledge is important and helpful for the teacher. This is because the teacher will not find it difficult to cater for different abilities and would also make selecting reading materials for the class easier.”  
**(Preliminary semi-structured interview).**

In the classroom, she was observed teaching letter-sound relationship and the example of this is seen in the following extract:

Phetso: Class, I want you to read letters A-Z and the sound produced by each letter from the chart while I point to each letter (Phetso points while they read). Who can come and pick any letter card, identify the letter and produce the letter sound. Pule.

Pule: ‘a’ /a/.

Phetso: Good boy, class repeat after him.

C: ‘a’ /a/

Phetso: Good. Loeto

Loeto: ‘b’ /b/ (Produces the Setswana sound).

Phetso: Good try, is the sound correct? Who can help Loeto?

Lesedi: /b/ (She produces the correct sound).

Phetso: Very good Lesedi. Class repeat what Loeto said. (Phetso continues the activity for all the letter cards). **(Classroom observation).**

Phetso carried the lesson up to the end without resorting to translating into Setswana even though Loeto produced the /b/ sound in Setswana. This was because they are still familiar with Breakthrough to Setswana sounds from standard 1 class. She also resorted to learners' peer correction and used charts and letter cards to reinforce and facilitate learners' understanding. For the above classroom interaction with the learners, Phetso's comment was:

"I help them in practising, repeating the letters and letter sounds because I hope that will pave way to learning how to read words and attach meaning to read texts." **(Stimulated recall interview).**

A key factor in building the learners' confidence to participate actively in their lessons in Phetso's class was seen to be the use of the English language. However, she indicated that she found it productive, in terms of constructing meaning, to occasionally discuss unknown vocabulary in Setswana. This is especially if it is necessary before proceeding to read because it is a standard 2 level and very few are still struggling to comprehend in English. This is seen in the comment in the following extract below:

Creativity is essential because they need a variety of activities so that they become interested in reading. That is why I feel that translation is the best option if I have tried all the techniques and they are not working for me." **(Preliminary semi-structured interview).**

It was observed that the skills that she mentioned during the preliminary semi-structured interview were reflective in her interaction with the learners. She varied her activities clearly and correctly articulated the sounds. Her instructions progressed from teacher modelling the correct sound and providing opportunity for learners to practice newly learned knowledge of the spelling features. She also engaged them in guided reading to individual reading practices while other learners were listening. The following different activities are seen in the extract below:

Phetso: You are now going to use the consonants and vowels written on the chalkboard to write three letter words. The vowel should be in the middle as we have been doing. (As learners were doing the activity, the teacher moved around helping and marking their work).



Phetso: Stop writing and tell me the words that you have written. Tshepo.

Tshepo: *Mat*.

Phetso: Very good Tshepo. You can see that the vowel is in the middle. Lesedi.

Lesedi: *Cup*.

Phetso: Very good Lesedi. (Words written by the learners: rub, cat, cow, pot, lid, hat, sit, toy, dog, rat, fur, rib, pen, key, box etc.) We are now going to use the words to construct sentences and I will give you an example. I like to rub my hand (using actions). Class repeat the sentence after me.

Class: I like to rub my hand.

Phetso: Good. Now use any word on the chalkboard and construct a sentence.

Raise your hands. Pule .

Pule: I have lost my key.

Phetso: Good boy. Class repeat the sentence. (Learners constructed sentences following the same routine). (**Classroom observation**).

On the above exchange, her approach to vocabulary development through CVC leads to activation of learners' prior knowledge. This capitalised on the possibilities of developing their critical thinking as they had to compose sentences using words. Therefore, there were opportunities for the learners' to contribute their own thoughts through construction of their own sentences, which was based on knowledge from the school and their homes. Phetso gave the following reason:

“It is important to relate the words that they have composed with real life situation and this could be indicated by engaging them in the activity where they have to construct their own sentences. By doing this activity, it is an indication of attaching meaning to the words done by learners not the teacher.” (**Stimulated recall interview**).

Phetso resorted to alternative ways to explain the meaning of words or sentences because her main aim was to engage learners to communicate in English language throughout their reading lesson. She was found to be using actions in order to avoid translating to Setswana. Her class

was full of life and enthusiasm as most of the learners' participated in the activities carried out in the class. They also seemed eager to answer the questions. She commented on this by saying:

“I managed to give instructions in English throughout the lesson. If I felt that they do not understand the instructions, I used words that they will understand, use gestures or give them an example. I want them to get used to the idea that for an English lesson, they should speak English language only and it is working for me even though they are in standard two.” **Stimulated recall interview.**

It was observed that during the lesson, Phetso wanted learners not to provide more than one word when asked to give the words that they have written. It seems that all the learners were eager to participate in the lesson as they wanted to present all the words that they had written. This is shown by the following extract:

“Class, if I call your name, I want you to provide me with only one word from the words that you have written because I want everybody to participate in the activity. **(Classroom observation).**

### **7.3.2 The challenges that the teachers face when teaching reading**

The dominating component of the institutional context, which the teachers work, is the monthly tests. Regardless of their individual goals for teaching reading, the teacher acknowledges that the top priority is on tests success because the syllabus is examination oriented. Phetso's comment was as follows:

“Following the syllabus is fine but the way the Senior Management Team (SMT) monitor how we follow the syllabus and monthly tests lead to the teachers just rushing through the objectives without careful planning.” **(Preliminary semi-structured interview).**

Good time management and the safeguarding of instructional time are seen as essential to the completion of the stipulated objectives for the term in the syllabus. Phetso's felt that it was not good as it seems that much focus is on the objectives rather than learners' reading performance. The teacher noted:

“I have a strong feeling that covering the syllabus objectives for the term is not good because it is like I am just focussing on monthly tests, which are also time consuming. We really focus on them so much to an extent that sometimes it is like they are more important than the learners’ performance that we are here for.”

**(Stimulated recall interview).**

In the preliminary semi structured interview, Phetso declared that she is still trying to build learners self confidence in reading because few have low self-esteem. She have realised that it might be because they were ridiculed by their previous teacher, or some of the learners in the class also laughed at them if they had difficulty in reading or responding to questions in class. She expressed the point as follows:

“One observation that I have made with my pupils is that they are shy. They do not want to be seen by others that they cannot read. I think they have low self-esteem because sometimes I find that others laugh at them when they read.”

**(Preliminary semi-structured interview).**

Very few learners did not fully participate in the reading activities carried out in the class because of low self-esteem. It was observed that they participated only if the teacher nominated them by calling their names even though their hands were not raised. They responded with the correct answers. It seems as if they were not eager to participate willingly unless asked to do so and this indicated that they might be lacking self-confidence. Phetso gave the reason for the lack of participation for some of the learners in the following extract by saying:

“I have explained to the class that they have all come to school to learn and if I can discover that they laugh at another learner during the lesson, I will punish them. Instead of laughing, they are now assisting each other and the classroom environment is conducive to learning”. **(Stimulated recall interview).**

### **7.3.3 Comments**

It was obvious in Phetso’s school that teachers learn from interacting with other teachers. It was apparent from the observation and discussion with her that the atmosphere for exchanging ideas and opinions existed as they worked together as a team to foster the teaching of the phonics

method. This was the only school in the urban area, which have mounted a Breakthrough to English workshop, where the phonic method is practiced. It was through the workshops conducted in the school that lead to her appropriate teaching strategies that enhanced her knowledge in reading methods/techniques and teaching of phonics. During the interview, she talked about the strategies that she utilised to teach phonics and it was observed that she employed them in her teaching. Phetso was the only teacher who avoided translation by varying her teaching strategies to facilitate learners' understanding of what they were reading. Even though she taught letter-sound relationship, she engaged learners in constructing meaning of the words taught by involving them in composing sentences with the words thus, giving them the opportunity to construct meaning from word to sentence level.

Phetso was able to explain her reasons for approaching the teaching of reading interactively. It seemed essential that before and individual teacher is prepared to enter into the kind of interaction, where learners are taught how to read in second language, they must have experience in teaching reading. However, it seemed that for her, gaining considerable pedagogical subject knowledge from in-service programmes enhanced her classroom practices and moulded her into a reading teacher.

#### **7.4 Case study 3**

Thobo is a teacher who holds PTTC certificate. She has been in the teaching field for a considerable number of years. Therefore, she is expected to reflect relatively good pedagogical knowledge and practices in teaching reading in both lower and upper standards. The teacher declined to be observed the second time because she felt that the exercise was taking much of her time.

##### **7.4.1 Teacher's pedagogical subject knowledge and practice in teaching reading**

Thobo mentioned choral, guided and silent reading as the methods that she employs during the teaching of reading. The instructional approaches indeed could support learners learning of reading in English language especially if the teacher uses them accordingly. The following extract illustrates Thobo's point:

“I use choral reading, guided and silent reading to mention a few. They are effective but can be improved by incorporating them with the other skills that I am not familiar with so that the learners can cope with the reading demands in the class.” **(Preliminary semi-structures interview).**

It is noteworthy that the teacher was cautious in crediting herself with the skills that she identified excellence in teaching reading. She pointed willingly to areas, where she felt was lacking the skills in teaching. For example, she said:

“I am not really familiar with phonics because this is my first year to teach standard 4 classes as I have been teaching upper standards only. I am also not familiar with letter-sound relationship. Some of these things are new to me. I have not come across them in my teaching career.” **(Stimulated recall interview).**

For lower primary learners in Botswana, learning to read is a dual task, as learners’ have to deal with both the language of instruction and the concepts presented in the read texts across the curriculum. Thobo stated:

“The reading skill is important as learners have to comprehend other subjects and if I do not develop their reading skill, then I will be not doing them justice.” **(Preliminary semi-structured interview).**

While it is acknowledged by the teacher that reading to comprehend in English language is of critical importance, it seems that much care is not exhibited in the extract below:

Thobo: Class, look at the picture chart on the wall and listen as I interpret the information on the chart. (The teacher explains the information on the diagram about the map of Gaborone). Thuso, which road leads to Sir Seretse Khama Airport?

Thuso: Sir Seretse Khama Highway.

Thobo: Moreki, which road leads to the University of Botswana?

Moreki: Independence Avenue.

Thobo: Is that correct? Who can help him? Lame.

Lame: Mabuto Drive.

Thobo: Look very carefully in the map and write the answers to the questions that I am going to write on the chalkboard. **(Classroom observation).**

The questions were not used as starting point for discussion, nor were they genuinely exploratory. It seems that the teacher needed correct answers only because the answers given by the learners could have prompted further discussion. This could have led to engaging them in discussing other places, which the roads lead to. There was no evidence of classroom interaction as the learners did not interact with their peers or with the teacher. There was also no close observation of whether they indeed attempted to do the task. During the stimulated recall interview, Thobo stated:

“Most of the learners have problems in reading and that is why I had to read to them because it could have taken them the whole period for them to read the text.  
**(Stimulated recall interview).**

Providing learners with positive feedback is the way of acknowledging the fact that they have responded in the class. It is also a way of reinforcing and developing their confidence. The following extract is Thobo’s comment:

“A good teacher of reading should also acknowledge pupils responses.”  
**(Preliminary semi-structured interview).**

Thobo’s instructional practices showed no evidence of providing learners with positive feedback to boost their confidence and self-esteem when they responded or attempted to respond to the questions. Her response was contradictory to the comment of the preliminary interview and the following is what she said:

“I know that sometimes I forget to acknowledge their response. This is because I do not think that it should be taken too seriously as the main focus of the lesson is to achieve the objective.” (**Stimulated recall interview**).

Thobo was clearly the controller of the discourse. She asked the questions after reading the text while the learners were listening. She moved on without checking if the learners really understood what she read as she has already noted that her focus was on time. This is shown by the following extract:

Thobo: Moreki, Which road leads to the University of Botswana?

Moreki: Independence Avenue.

Thobo: Is that correct? Who can help him? Lame.

Lame: Mabuto Drive. (**Classroom observation**).

She nominated only the few learners who raised their hands to respond to her questions and did not utilise the wait time procedure for the learner to re-think of the correct answer. It seems as if the teacher was in a hurry to finish the lesson and the following was her comment:

I know most of them did not comprehend and were not in the same understanding level with the ones I nominated to respond to the questions because I was focussing on time.” (**Stimulated recall interview**).

In the interview the teacher declared that after reading, she gives the learners a written or oral activity to test their comprehension skills. Even though she did not engage the learners in any reading activity as they had to listen to her reading, she commented by saying:

“I give pupils an exercise of either answering oral or written questions after reading. It is one way of finding out if they have comprehended the text.” (**Preliminary semi-structures interview**).

The instructional practice in the following extract seems to be a mismatch view of testing learners’ comprehension skills with what was declared earlier on. It was observed that there was no mutual participation where they could be engaged in reading the questions before writing to

check if they understand them. Learners were just submissive and followed the instructions below:

Thobo: Look very carefully at the map and write the answers to the questions that I am going to write on the chalkboard. (Teacher writes five questions. She does not read or ask one learner to read the questions to check if they understand them. The teacher does not move around to assist and mark the work of the learners. When they had just started writing, they were told that they must get ready for the next lesson). **(Classroom observation).**

She gave reasons for the instructional practice and change in her teaching approach as based on the following extract:

“It is because of individual reading differences amongst learners and there was not enough time for me to engage learners in oral reading.” **(Stimulated recall interview).**

#### **7.4.2 The challenges that the teachers face when teaching reading**

Thobo indicated that there is a lot of pressure in teaching as the main focus is to cover the syllabus objectives and monthly tests and that is why observing time is crucial for her because:

“Teaching nowadays is to cover the syllabus objectives and write monthly tests and that is why observing time is important for me.” **(Preliminary semi-structured interview).**

Most of the learners were quiet and seemed not to be participating in the lesson. They did not raise their hands to respond to the questions and seemed not to be interested on what was done. Thobo gave the following reason:

“Some are shy to read in the class because they are not fluent so they think that others will laugh at them. They can read only if the teacher forces them.” **(Stimulated recall interview).**



### **7.4.3 Comments**

Thobo talked of different reading techniques that she utilises in her teaching during the interview, which were not reflective in her practice. This suggests that she may be lacking pedagogical confidence to employ them. Moreover, learners' responses to the questions were not moved forward in a speculative manner as they were not encouraged to pose questions and there was no evidence of collaborative discussion. Even though Thobo mentioned that most of the learners did not comprehend, she avoided the use of Setswana, which could have supported learners' learning of the instructional language in reading. It should be noted that the learners might not have clearly shared the same interpretation of the whole activity. This is because their comprehension skills could have been assessed through the written exercise, which was not the case during the lesson because there was no evidence that they did the activity.

### **7.5 Conclusion**

The two teachers in the case studies clearly focused on developing learners' accuracy and literal comprehension through listening to them reading aloud and focussing on correcting their pronunciation and punctuation skills. This is however, contrary to the findings of the study carried out by Bernhardt, (1983) that revealed that comprehension of passages read silently is higher than that of the passages read aloud. Also, the value of interactions between the case study teachers was quite evident as was seen in some schools where teachers learned from each other. Finally, the use of different reading techniques though espoused in the case studies was not utilised by all the three teachers in the teaching of reading. Moreover, this is contrary to the Pressley et al. (2001) findings which revealed that teachers who are considered outstanding balance skill instruction with real reading and writing when teaching learners who are in the first year of primary education. The lack of use of different reading techniques, suggested that some of the teachers lacked pedagogical confidence to employ them and this is a clear indication that the case studies of teachers' pedagogical subject knowledge and classroom practice are not always consistent.

In the following chapter, I shall focus on discussing the findings of this study as they sit alongside with prior research.

## **CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION**

### **8.0 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a discussion on how the findings of the study can contribute to a conceptual understanding of teachers' pedagogical subject knowledge, and their espoused and actual practices of early L2 reading. This is also particularly in relation to previous research findings in the literature. The discussion reflects a combination of data from interpretation of semi-structured interviews (See chapter 5), facilitated classroom observation results (See chapter 6) and case studies of teachers' pedagogical subject knowledge and classroom practice (See chapter 7). This will help to illuminate the features of the teachers' pedagogical knowledge and practices in reading. A detailed discussion of this chapter will be addressing the range of themes that emerged from the findings of the study, which are as follows:

1. Teachers' classroom practices are not always consistent with their espoused pedagogical beliefs about teaching reading
2. The role of the teacher in the teaching of reading
3. Teachers place more emphasis on decoding than comprehension
4. The role of Pre-service training
5. Challenges faced in the teaching of reading
6. Conclusion

### **8.1 Teachers' classroom practices are not always consistent with their espoused pedagogical beliefs about teaching reading**

The findings revealed that the teachers' espoused pedagogical beliefs indicated that they are proficient in the teaching of reading and their classroom practices revealed that they were not always consistent because the purposes of the approaches they utilised were not always in harmony with the recommended purposes.

### **8.1.1 Approaches used to teach reading**

In their interviews, teachers expressed a view that an effective approach to reading was to vary the reading approaches. The classroom observations indicated that they did indeed use individual, guided and group approaches. However, the pedagogical purposes of these approaches were not always in harmony with the recommended purposes.

In terms of the findings of the study that relates to reading aloud, most of the teachers' acknowledged that reading aloud is essential but it seemed that their emphasis was on pronunciation and usage of punctuations during reading. The teachers' belief is that it is imperative to ensure that learners' possess the ability to pronounce words correctly which seemed to be a pre-determinant in gauging their reading fluency instead of how well they comprehend the texts. The teachers focused wholly on monitoring how learners pronounce words and whether they observed punctuations rather than in assisting learners to comprehend the texts effectively. In some of the classes, the activity also took a considerable amount of time as the teachers had to make sure that all the learners participated in the activity. This finding is in harmony with that of Cutting & Scarborough, (2006) whose study revealed that oral proficiency of beginners up to the tenth grade, also contributes to reading comprehension beyond decoding while the focal point is on the specific reading comprehension measure employed. However, I argue that pronouncing words correctly during reading does not guarantee that all learners understand the meaning of the words. This is because in classroom practice it was observed that some of the learners could not respond to written questions even though they pronounced the words confidently while reading. This is an indication that they lacked the comprehension skills to make sense of what they had read. Correspondingly, Topping & Ferguson, (2006) findings revealed that vocabulary and word recognition are essential because even if the learner can produce accurate pronunciation by decoding, it does not guarantee reading fluency and comprehension of texts.

The fact that the learners' are still at the preliminary reading stage raises concern in the sense that unless the L2 reader is already orally proficient in the target language, the ability to pronounce words correctly is not helpful in the comprehension process. This is in agreement

with the study on struggling readers carried out by Savage, (2006), which revealed that oral proficiency made a small but unique contribution to reading comprehension beyond reading fluency and listening comprehension. However, “reading aloud” approach is not in agreement with the findings of Bernhardt, (1983) whose study revealed that comprehension of passages read silently is higher than that of the passages read aloud. It seems that when learners read aloud, they concentrate more on pronunciation rather than on meaning. This might be an indication that they do not want to be embarrassed by making mistakes while reading which is seen to de-motivate them from participating in class. Significantly, lacking proficiency in reading is an indication that learners lack comprehension skills which are overlooked by the concerned teachers. This was evident in one class as learners read the text silently before the teacher asked them to respond to written questions and most of the learners responded very well to the questions. Therefore, the claim is that even though reading aloud can be considered one of the reading skills that assists learners to read fluently and gain confidence in the language, it cannot, however, solely be assumed as an indicator of reading success.

The findings raised in this study relating to guided reading approach, which is widely used with top-down reading approaches was considered helpful for comprehension building as texts are jointly read and re-read by learners and the teacher. The teachers believed that guided reading as an approach helps learners to practise reading strategies while the teacher is guiding them. Indeed the views of the teachers are in agreement with those of Ford & Opitz, (2008), who asserted that during guided reading, learners receive ample support to encourage an eventual outcome of successful, independent silent reading. Also the findings of a study conducted by Harris, (2004) at Illinois concluded that: “These pragmatic educators sensed that frequent small group instruction and assessment components, inherent in guided reading, were an outstanding vehicle for achieving individualized instruction” (p. 24). However, the findings revealed that the teachers used guided reading with the whole class and in this case, learners’ individual needs were not met. It seemed that there was no evidence of checking if learners were using effective strategies while they read which could help them to read with fluency. This is an indication that the teacher might not even be aware of the strategies that the learners use.

In terms of the approach of reading in pairs or groups utilized by some of teachers in the study, it was highlighted that the approaches was seen to motivate learners. The teachers believed that engaging learners to read in pairs was a strategy to assist learners who struggle during reading, as reading with peers is seen to boost their confidence. Therefore, they comprehend better without being intimidated by the presence of the teacher. The teachers' claim is that the strategy is essential for shy learners and those who have weak reading skills because, when they work with peers, they also socialize thus making the activity less threatening. Although the method was utilized in the observed classes, some of the learners tended to hide behind others and did not participate due to large number of learners in the class. It seemed that teaching large classes is a constraint on paired reading as it restricts teachers in monitoring individual learners' progress.

These findings are in harmony with those of Taylor, et al. (2000) who found from their observation study that more accomplished primary school teachers engaged in more small groups than whole class teaching. This is complemented by Onsomu et al., (2006, p. 19) in their findings that "under the school level model, schools with smaller pupils-teacher ratios were estimated to perform better than schools with larger pupil-teacher ratios". Taylor et al. (2000) also found in their study that skilled teachers elicited higher levels of pupil engagement, preferred coaching to telling when interacting with pupils, and involved pupils in more high level thinking related to reading. In their case, learners are not passive but actively engaged in the lesson. They argued that the teacher can, through frequent and close observation of children's reading behavior, develop insight into their reading processes. By using that information, the teacher can structure instructional activities to provide young readers the experiences they need to develop as strategic readers, which seemed not possible for the situation in this study because of teaching large classes.

### **8.1.2 Integrating the language skills**

The teachers' narratives expressed in the interviews suggest that the teaching of reading is best approached through integrating language skills, based on the belief that all four language modes are inter-related. The notion of integrating the language skills tally with what they were taught in their pre-service training and also with the curriculum of Botswana of which is structured around the four language skills. The syllabus and the teachers' guides are also structured around the four

language skills and therefore, this is pre-determined for them. However, the findings of the study revealed that speaking as a language mode tends to be ignored because teachers mostly assigned learners with written activities. This is contrary to Cutting & Scarborough, (2006) research that revealed that oral language proficiency of beginners up to the tenth grade, also contributed to reading comprehension beyond decoding. The implication of this finding is that in addition to receptive measures of comprehension, expressive features of oral proficiency are vital in the reading process. Although their main focus is to develop reading skills, they should also engage learners in listening and speaking activities to enhance their vocabulary knowledge and facilitate reading across the curriculum. Thus ignoring speaking makes it difficult for learners to express their own ideas and most of the students appeared to be self-conscious when using L2 as they wanted to avoid making mistakes.

In general, very little time seemed to be spent in contextual oral activities and an example of the lesson that involved learners actively was evident in Matlho's classroom practice. Learners were engaged in a speaking activity in which reading embodied a link between home and the school and they seemed to participate effectively in a constructive manner. The speaking activity was authentic because the learners shared their experiences of their birthdays before reading and writing birthday card messages. The written messages were also read in class, which seemed to be an example of contextual approach in reading. Therefore, I argue that even though the main focus of the study is not the speaking skill, depriving learners of the opportunity to exchange ideas during and after reading does not help them to develop their reading skills.

### **8.1.3 Assessment**

In the interviews teachers expressed the belief that assessment of reading was important to measure learners' reading comprehension. This can be done through a variety of different activities, including oral questioning. However, the classroom observations revealed that assessment practices were often peripheral to the learning. The dominant assessment activities for checking if the learners comprehended the text was through the use of written questions, tests and spelling dictation. This is an indication that in most cases teachers tend to use 'coping strategies' of simplifying and phrasing the assessment tasks after reading by engaging learners in activities that appear not to engage them in thinking about and responding to what they have

read. Most of the activities were filling in blanks and dictation spelling, which were not assessment tasks which address reading comprehension. This was apparent in Thobo's class where learners were assigned to complete filling in blanks activity and were asked to stop writing while most of the class were still writing the date. The teacher did not even check if they had attempted to do the activity. Therefore, it seems that these teachers might lack confidence with appropriate assessment activities for reading, and particularly with assessment tasks to determine reading comprehension. In particular, teachers did not use oral questioning as a way of inviting learners to respond to what they had read and to construct meaning from text. Reading is an active, meaning-making process. Fresch, (2008) reminds us that reading is a constructive process where learners have to use active techniques to assist them in developing comprehension skills by reflecting and talking about what they are doing in a constructive way.

#### **8.1.4 Phonics approach**

In their interviews, the teachers argued that teaching reading using the phonics approach is important because they believed that it is the basis for learning to read at lower standards/age groups which reinforces reading across the curriculum. Their belief is supported by the findings of the reviewed researches (NRP, 2000; DEST, 2005; The Clackmannashire Report (Johnstone & Watson, 2005); Rose Report, 2006) that noted that the phonics instruction is an effective method of teaching the learners early reading skills. However, for many teachers, the belief is only theoretical, as practically they are not teaching the approach. Many teachers expressed a lack of experience in using phonics in the classroom, which led to a lack of confidence in that area. For those who taught the phonics strategies (Phetso, Peo and Metsi), it was evident that their repertoire was limited and not always appropriately implemented. For example, some teachers used letter names rather than letter sounds during their practices, suggesting uncertainty about how to develop phonological knowledge and this seems that they have problems with teaching larger phonological awareness beyond phoneme-grapheme addressed by phonics instruction underlined by Ziegler & Goswami, (2005).

The teaching of the phonics method during pre-service training seems to be not adequately developed. The curriculum emphasis is on reading through a combination of phonics and whole language learning during early reading. The teachers theoretically understand the importance of

phonics but practically it seems to be used by teachers who received workshop training in Breakthrough to English, which is equivalent to the Breakthrough to Setswana programme. In the case of this study, only one school was familiar with the programme even though it was at an initial stage. There was evidence that where the programme was catered for, the teachers were not fully competent in teaching the phonics.

Therefore, this lack of confidence in implementing a phonic approach may be one factor that impedes reading proficiency and development across the curriculum in Botswana Primary Schools.

### **8.1.5 Pre-reading strategies**

Most of the teachers' commentaries in the interview articulated the importance of pre-reading strategies to activate learners' prior knowledge before reading. Their belief was that it helps them to cater for the learners' individual needs and also, it facilitates reading comprehension. Their belief is in agreement with the view that "for both local and global coherence, readers need to incorporate background knowledge and ideas (retrieved from long term memory) to make sense of details that are only implicitly mentioned" (Cain, 2010, p. 74). Different techniques that they utilise to arouse learners' interest to read were indicated. However, their practices indicated that they relied heavily on pre-reading activities where the main focus was for the learners' to understand the meaning of the new vocabulary. Although the significance that pre-reading plays was acknowledged by most of the teachers, it seemed that explanation of new vocabulary before learners engaged in the task was the dominant, sometimes the only strategy in most of the lessons observed. However, vocabulary knowledge strategy is not the only influence on learning to read because elements such as "...restricted background knowledge, interference from L1, limited proficiency in L2 and L1 reading proficiency all might contribute to such differences" (Verhoeven, 2000, pgs. 313-314). Of course, as Laufer, (1997) acknowledges, vocabulary knowledge is important in helping the reader understand the text. However, it is not the only strategy to draw on learners' prior knowledge.

The NRP, (2000) view is that if learners have not developed considerable oral vocabulary knowledge, it will disadvantage them in text comprehension. Pre-reading is also done to activate the readers' schemata of the topic or new vocabulary that might make reading difficult, as well



as to prepare the reader for the text they are about to read. In the study carried out by Myhill & Brackley, (2004, p. 274), they found out that “children’s existing schemata are powerful bases for supporting new learning or indeed for confounding it”. Therefore, activating their prior knowledge is essential before they read. Similarly, Kern, (2000)’s argument is that the learners must use their own background knowledge to understand the text. If readers rely on their background knowledge to make sense of what they are reading they need to be exposed to content to give them the context for understanding what they read. This is in agreement with Grabe & Stoller, (2002, p. 18) that “linguistic information from the text interacts with information activated by the reader from long-term memory, as background knowledge”. Similarly, in their interviews, the teachers also maintained that the background knowledge of the learners is important in helping them to cater for their different reading abilities.

Their perspective is that working with learners before they begin reading a text helps them to get more involved because their schema have been activated which in return enhances their reading comprehension. This is in agreement with the findings of the study carried out by Carrell, (1987) on the interaction of content and formal schema for intermediate ESL learners and revealed that if both form and content is unfamiliar, then reading becomes relatively difficult. My argument is that the activities that were carried out in this study to activate the learners’ schemata were not adequate to facilitate comprehension for the learners’ individual reading differences because they repeatedly used the same teaching strategies, such as the singing of songs. This did not motivate the learners to read with confidence. Similarly, in the debate of the best way to teach reading, Wray, et al. (1999) strongly argue that it is important not to overlook the significance of the strategies teachers use in the teaching of reading. This finding confirms the significance for the teachers of reading to have a wide repertoire of engaging and varied pre-reading strategies.

The way teachers carried pre-reading activities seemed not only to limit expansion of the learners’ expressive capabilities, but also served to inhibit the development of connection between learners’ existing ideas and those presented in class during the reading lesson. If learning to read involves linking what the learners’ need to learn with what is already ‘known’ and many require some modification of the existing conceptual framework, this was not the case in most activities in this study. I argue that, although pre-reading strategies are meant to provide

opportunities for the learners to make use of their learning experience through articulation of the meanings which they hold, I fear that the lack of opportunity to express their ideas will extend the separation of school knowledge from everyday knowledge.

## **8.2 The role of the teacher in the teaching of reading**

The teacher's role in the teaching of reading is important because their pedagogical knowledge and practices in the class are crucial for learners as learning how to read is fundamental for all subjects across the curriculum.

### **8.2.1 Teacher-learner classroom interaction**

The teachers' interviews suggest a child-centred approach as their view was that for the learners to comprehend the texts, they should engage them in group/pair work activities in order to construct meaning from the text. This is not in harmony with the findings from the study by Adenyinka & Samson, (2007) that revealed that learners in Botswana classes are passive. Therefore, an increase in pair or group work means a corresponding decrease in the teacher's visible control of the classroom and requires a shift in thinking from a teacher-centred pedagogy to learner-centred pedagogy. However, in their pedagogical practices, it was evident that a teacher-centred pedagogy dominated and that culturally determined views of the role of the teacher and control meant that they did not always teach in line with their espoused beliefs. Instead of the learners being engaged more in verbal and peer interactions, it seemed that they participated only when asked to read or to answer questions even though the curriculum emphasis is on child-centred and communicative approach in teaching. This is not in harmony with Turner's, (1995) opinion that learners can share their unique perspective of the text when they relate to the same text in different ways, for example: reading and discussing in groups, pairs, and literature circles. This seems to suggest that teachers' pedagogical practices tend to be teacher-centred which coincides with the study by Fuller, et al. (1994) which revealed that teaching in Botswana classes is teacher-centred. Similarly, the study carried by Tabulawa, (1998) revealed that teaching in Botswana is teachers-centred as the teacher is seen as imparting knowledge while the learners receive and answer questions, which are controlled by the teacher.

The teacher-centred approach may be reinforced by the constraints in which teachers work and by which they tend to justify their desire to class control. They hold the view that their role is to model appropriate reading skills to the learners. Therefore, I argue that the teachers' claim to be using a learner-centred/constructivist approach is not seen in practice: teaching remains a teacher-centred style where the learners' are generally passive receivers of the reading instructions and activities, with little evidence of lively classroom interaction. Similarly, the study carried by Ntoi & Lefoka, (2002) showed a similar finding that teacher-centred style of teaching combined with asking learners questions prevailed in their study. In this study, the findings revealed that in most of the lessons, some of the learners were engaged in the reading activities before either answering few controlled questions orally or in a written form. A typical teacher-centred example was observed in the lesson that was carried out by Thobo. The teacher read the prepared text and explained it before asking learners to write answers to the written questions. When they were still writing the date, they were told that the lesson was over.

### **8.2.2 Questioning technique**

Some of the teachers indicated that they gauged the success of the read texts by asking learners' questions. However, in practice the questioning techniques used by teachers often facilitated teachers' control of the interaction and it was dominated by questions in a written form. There were very few instances where teachers used turn-taking, wait time or recycling questions strategies to encourage deeper thinking, enhance learners' self-esteem and also show them that their answers were appreciated. The findings illustrate that it is a common practice to completely ignore many learners' responses and only acknowledge certain correct answers which are not carried further to prompt further discussion. From a teaching and learning perspective, the arbitrary nature of rejection of answers misses valuable opportunities for cognitive development in reading comprehension.

Potentially, incorrect answers are a valuable resource for teachers who can use them to identify slight misunderstandings or complete lack of comprehension in learners. Findings from McCormick & Donato's, (2000) study on an ESL teacher questioning techniques indicate how questions can be used constructively. From a socio cultural point of view, they argue that questioning is not just an elicitation technique that is made available at the teacher's disposal.

Instead, questions need to be understood as tools for shared cognitive functioning in the social context of tasks in teaching and learning how to read. Similarly, Fresch, (2008) is of the opinion that the teacher's role in a constructivist classroom is to prompt and facilitate discussion and support learners by modeling, scaffolding and coaching. They also seem to function as an effective discursive tool to build teamwork and to scaffold comprehension and unambiguity during the reading lessons. In addition, an understanding of a teacher's questions can be achieved through understanding the framework of scaffolding and in reference to the teachers' goals.

I argue that the questioning technique used by teachers in my study facilitated teachers' control of the interaction rather than helping learners to connect what they have read with what they already know or to express a personal response. Similarly, the study carried by Myhill & Brackley, (2004) revealed that the few questions asked by the teachers were focusing on the content covered in the lesson taught rather than their prior knowledge. Moreover, a very close interaction technique does not encourage communication between the teacher and the learners, which could discourage the learners from developing an interest in seeking clarification of complex vocabulary from the teacher.

### **8.2.3 Issue of control of learning**

Teachers' commentaries from their interview expressed a view that the way they teach reading is controlled by the syllabus objectives. This is because even in the teachers' guides the lessons are pre-planned for them. The findings of the study revealed that teachers seemed to have difficulty in utilizing their special skills or attending to noted problems in their reading classes because of their schedule to meet the expectation of the syllabus. The teachers perceived the syllabus as a guideline that informs them on the choice of topics and activities that they have to use in teaching reading. This seems to be based in the complexity of the teaching situations the teachers find themselves facing of large classes, syllabus constraints, expectations from the learners and Education Management. In a situation like this, teachers are forced to employ a set of strategies that ensures their survival in their pedagogical practices but fails to take cognizance of individual learners' reading development, which can facilitate their reading comprehension across the curriculum. Therefore, they are faced with the dilemma of choosing between an emphasis on the development of learners' reading comprehension skills or an emphasis on the completion of the

syllabus in preparation for the formal assessment in the form of tests and standard four attainment examinations.

It can be seen quite clearly that the claim is that teachers' focus is on the syllabus objectives rather than learners' reading abilities. Teachers seemed to have the control over content of what to teach, and the questions to ask, while the learners on the other hand, can be seen as providers of answers to the questions. Therefore, there is a mismatch between what other teachers believe to be effective teaching of reading and the kind of behaviours that actually take place in the Botswana classrooms as they attempt to meet the rigidity and expectations of the syllabus objectives. Similarly, the study carried out by Moloi, Morobe, & Urwick, (2008, p. 616) revealed that it seem teachers are "more concerned with maintaining their own authority and with "covering the syllabus" than with developing learners' reading skills". The findings on the pedagogical practices in the class revealed that most of the activities were initiated by the teachers, based on the syllabus objectives, teachers' guides and the learners' text books. The finding was similar to the findings in the study carried out by Myhill, (2006, p. 39) as she points out in her study of classroom discourse that the teacher discourse will not support learners' learning if it is "concerned first and foremost with curriculum delivery and with leading pupils to a predetermined destination".

#### **8.2.4 Cultural view of role of teachers and learners is different from child-centred pedagogy**

Another powerful influence upon the way the teachers play out a controlling role in the classroom may be the cultural view of role of teachers and learners in Botswana, which is different from the beliefs and values of child-centred pedagogy. Learners' cultural upbringing may be acting as a barrier in learning to read as in most cases at the early age of learning, learners are still finding it difficult to express their ideas freely as they are restricted by their cultural values (Tabulawa, 1997). It was evident in the classes observed that most of the learners were not eager to respond to most of the instructions. This is similar to the study by Tabulawa, (1997, p. 264) that revealed that "what appears as student passiveness in class might actually be an expression of their traditional relationship towards elders, in this case, the teachers". This compelled the teachers in my study to resort to nominating them by calling their names, which

was beneficial to the teachers as they responded positively. This is an indication that they might be shy or not eager to participate due to socio cultural beliefs. Even though, there were shy learners who did not show that they were eager to participate in the lesson by raising their hands, they responded well when asked to read or answer a question. Therefore, the strategy of teacher selecting who to respond was successful in drawing in responses from quieter pupils, but nonetheless meant that teachers were very much in control in teacher-centred learning environments.

At this early stage of reading in L2, promoting learners' motivation constantly is essential from the start of the reading program because learners react willingly to the text when they are motivated. Therefore, this might also force teachers to take control of reading instruction in the class by employing strategies that do not provide learners with instances that would develop their comprehension skills. Therefore, I argue that the socio cultural context, in which learners are acquiring their second language, seems to influence their learning of how to read. This is also similar with findings of the study by Tabulawa, (1997) that reported that controlling style of teaching might be influenced by aspects of the social structure of the traditional view that the Motswana child is dominated, subordinated in order to show respect to the elders. In such circumstances, this might inform the actions of teachers and learners in the classroom.

However, it was also evident in the study that some of the learners lacked confidence to participate willingly in the class because of lack of interest in reading while it seemed that others were not motivated by the strategies utilized by the teacher. Indeed, Geske & Ozola, (2008, p. 71) in their analysis of data from IEA & PIRLS (2001) concluded that “students high achieving in reading literacy usually like reading for their own enjoyment and come from families where parents spend a lot of time on reading”. Therefore, children learn to love reading by being read to at home and at school. If parents and teachers do not offer a literate environment where learners can have access to books and where reading is perceived as enjoyable children will suffer by not enjoying reading that seems to lead to success in reading (OECD, 2002; 2010; Francis, et al. 2010).

### **8.3 Teachers place more emphasis on decoding than comprehension**

One feature of the teaching of reading of these Botswana teachers is that their teaching strategies tend to place more emphasis on decoding than on comprehension.

#### **8.3.1 Sounding of words**

Most of the teachers emphasized vocabulary knowledge as they believe it is important because it facilitate comprehension. Cain et al., (2010) study also revealed that knowing the vocabulary of the read text helps the learner as it is an indication of the text will be comprehended. However, in practice the activities that most of the teachers used in the class focused more on decoding of words rather than on activities that provide learners with word attack strategies when approaching unknown words to improve their comprehension skills.

The findings revealed that most of the teachers placed more emphasis on decoding than on comprehension because the activities that were mostly used focused much on sound-letter relationships, developing alphabetic awareness and introducing CVC words. This seemed to suggest that the teachers who especially teach lower standards are specifically interested in teaching words without taking them to the next level where learners can comprehend longer texts. Therefore, this might imply that there is inconsistency in their pedagogical subject knowledge, if not it is either limited or does not match with the demand they find themselves facing in the teaching of reading. It is also a concern because even though the learners are able to decode the words during reading, they are not given many opportunities where they can show that they are capable in reading texts with comprehension. However, Phetso carried the lesson to the next level by engaging learners in using the words they produced to construct sentences to show that they understand their meaning. Ironically, of course, the emphasis on decoding and the focus on letters and sounds may be a consequence of the promotion of phonics.

It is important to point out that teachers should not place too much emphasis on the use of phonics in the teaching of reading at the expense of other reading strategies, since research around the subject has produced mixed results. This is because the conclusion of a systematic review of the literature search by Torgerson et al., (2006)'s reported that phonics instruction

works, but only for accuracy, because it does not help children to understand text which is crucial in learning to read.

### **8.3.2 Comprehension at word level**

Teachers in this study expressed the importance of utilizing reading skills that facilitate comprehension. However, it was evident in their classroom practices that most of the activities observed were more focused on developing comprehension at word level only as the emphasis was on vocabulary. Concerning strategies that facilitate reading comprehension, all the teachers seemed to be aware of the importance of facilitating learners with reading skills that develop their reading comprehension. However, the results of the study indicate that most of the activities done to facilitate reading comprehension were mainly found to be at word level rather than sentence level. This finding is not supported by Aebbersold & Field, (1997) who argue that reading involves the reader, text, and an interaction between the reader and text: in other words, the act of reading is an active construction of meaning. Reading, according to them, cannot be regarded simply as a set of mechanical skills to be learned once and for all but rather as a complex process of making meaning from text for a variety of purposes and in a wide range of contexts.

I argue that in order to effectively comprehend what is being read, the teacher should draw the attention of the students to whole sentences, not just the words in the sentence. Further evidence appeared in some of the classes where teachers facilitated reading comprehension by engaging learners to use the dictionary to find the meaning of new words, which could be an important skill if taught properly. It is important in the sense that it is the skill that helps the learners to discover the meaning of words and also to understand the sequence and order of words which tend to be important throughout life. This assertion is in agreement with Laufer, (1997); Grabe & Stoller, (2002) that knowledge of the text vocabulary for L2 reader is crucial for them to comprehend the text in L1 or L2.. However, the findings of this study revealed that due to lack of reading texts, the teacher used dictionaries for standards 1-2 for a standard 3 class, which did not contain all the vocabulary intended to be covered. Therefore, using an age appropriate dictionary is ideal to teach the learners' how to use the dictionary's phonetic spellings to arrive at



accurate pronunciation of words. It can be argued that the strategy of engaging learners in finding new vocabulary from the dictionaries was found to foster the learners' reading comprehension because it assisted them to score considerable marks from the written assessment. Cain et al., (2009)'s study revealed that knowledge of vocabulary items in a read passage does not only envisage the learner's "comprehension level, it is also a good predictor of verbal IQ" (p. 53).

On the other hand, it can be claimed that although, the activity was productive, it could have facilitated comprehension much better if they could have been made aware of how the words in the dictionary are pronounced phonetically. If they could have been asked to construct sentences using the vocabulary, the teachers could have checked if the learners understood the taught vocabulary.

### **8.3.3 Translation**

Most of the teachers' narratives from the interview expressed a view that translating to Setswana is a powerful way to ensure learners' comprehension by clarifying conceptual ambiguities in lower standards. This concurs with Schroeder, (2005)'s observation that it is of utmost importance to use L1 in clarifying conceptual work because it aids in understanding the instruction before, during and after reading. The strategy of translation was seen to have the potential for facilitating concept development as well as increasing learners' participation in reading. This is in agreement with researchers (The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks, 2000; Barton & Pitt, 2003; Schroeder, 2005) who confirm that in early stages, use of the first language is tremendously helpful in clarification of conceptual work and it provides learners with a great deal of knowledge as well as a rapid development of literacy. However, in some instances translation was used even if it was evident that the learners' understood the instructions. On the other hand, it was observed that it was possible to avoid translation as it was witnessed in one class where the teacher avoided translation and instead used actions, gestures and repetition to make instructions easier for the learners. In this case, the strategy seemed to work very well as the learners were actively engaged in the lesson.

Translation supported word level understanding if it was apparent that there was interference in the construction of meaning and served as scaffolding for the learners to foster comprehension.

This study has strongly highlighted that most of the teachers' find translating to Setswana a powerful way to ensure learners' comprehension in lower standards by clarifying conceptual ambiguities. This is in agreement with Adenyinka & Samson, (2007)'s view that teachers need to know the teaching strategies that are most helpful in developing reading comprehension and those not worthwhile. In this case, teachers are aware that translation is a worthwhile strategy for them. However, Phetso avoided translation by employing gestures and repetition of words to make instructions easier of which worked well and seemed to facilitate comprehension in the class. My argument for employing translation is that, despite the fact that it is a worthwhile strategy, it can be seen as a limiting factor for the learners reading progress in L2 especially because of over using it even when it is not necessary.

#### **8.4 The role of Pre-service training**

Pre-service training is very important because that is where student teachers adequately obtain their pedagogical knowledge of teaching reading but in the findings of this study it seems that pre-service training was not done systematically.

##### **8.4.1 Pre-service training**

The teaching of L2 reading by using the phonic method seem to be not used by most of the teachers as the study revealed that only three of the observed teachers used the method effectively. This seems to be a problem of pre-service training rather than teachers' attitudes. This is in agreement with the NRP, (2000) recommendation that both pre-service and in-service teachers need further education about effective reading instructions in early reading which seems to be essential with the phonic approach. Although, the phonic method is recommended, it has not been put into practice during pre-service training as the syllabuses do not explicitly include the teaching of phonics either.

In standard 1, learners are taught how to read in Setswana following the Breakthrough to Setswana approach. Therefore, when they progress to standard 2, they are already familiar with Setswana phonic sounds and this seems to confuse them with the sounds they are taught in English because orthography is the same (Peacock & Morakaladi, 1995). It is much easier to learn to read in a language that you understand, and once you can read, this ability transfers

rapidly to the second language. In contrast, Verhoeven, (2000) argues that pre-existing knowledge of L1 might interfere with the reading process in L2. This is in accordance with the findings of this study as in some of the instances where the phonics were taught, some of the learners in standard 2 were producing some of the sounds in Setswana because they were still familiar with the sounds of the alphabetic code in Setswana from Breakthrough to Setswana approach in standard 1. The findings are also supported by Bell, (1995) who disputes that “the relationship between first and second literacies is highly complex, so that not all aspects of the L1 will necessarily aid the development of L2” (pgs. 687-688). I also argue that some learners in this study might be overwhelmed as they have to first acquire their cognitive linguistic abilities in their dialect. This is in accordance with some of the case studies Millar, (2008) presented that illustrated “the complexity of helping students to use their analysis of their mother tongue to learn English” (p. 106). Therefore, this might not be easy for them as they begin instructions at school in Setswana before they are efficient in their dialect. This might pose problems for them when they receive reading instructions in phonics.

If the teachers find that they lack the skills to provide learners with the basic reading techniques that can foster the foundation for reading proficiency, then it raises apprehension in the education of learners. It signals the importance of teacher confidence in teaching reading. As Adenyinka & Samson, (2007) put it, our assumptions as teachers do matter. If we are to guide and direct our learners, we need to know where we are going especially with the teaching strategies that are most likely to develop the reading comprehension and those not worthwhile. Therefore, teachers must be cognizant of their underlying beliefs and theories of literacy development especially how children begin to learn to read and how they develop from that point into an increasingly effective reader with a broadening range of texts (Byrne, 2002). They should be holding beliefs that are grounded in experience, information and have knowledge on how this literacy development is affected by the knowledge, experiences, and cognitive stage of children reading in L2 (Aebbersold, & Field, 1997). However, in the case of this study, the teachers’ argument reflects the way they received their pre service training. This seemed to suggest that they were not adequately prepared to teach components that deal with languages as they did not all specialise in that area of teaching Languages (Teaching Setswana and English) but did it as a minor option. In similar vein, N’Namdi, (2005, p. 8) suggests that, “regrettably, not all teachers

are trained in the technique of teaching reading” which has an impact on delivering effective L2 reading pedagogical practices for early readers. I concur with N’Namdi’s view because based on my knowledge and context; there is a relationship between the depth of teachers’ subject knowledge and the quality of their pedagogical practices, displayed by the teachers who gained considerable proficiency and competency in teaching reading.

#### **8.4.2 Teaching as generalists**

Training teachers in subject specialization is to make an individual teacher more confident, efficient and effective in their teaching of the specialist subject. However, in practice, in Botswana, they teach as generalists and they cannot be expected to have efficiency to teach all subjects across the curriculum. Teachers in Botswana primary schools have areas of specialties in teaching, such as Languages (Setswana and English) and Mathematics and Science, which means that not all teachers have been sufficiently exposed to reading approaches during their pre-service training. Although, they have received minimal training in Languages as minor subjects, they do not have the same level of expertise compared with the Languages teachers. As a consequence, those teaching reading as generalists do not have the same level of pedagogical expertise as those who specialized in the subject area. This is in contrast with the view of POSTnote, (2009) that indicated that an Ofsted inspection of 2008 recommended that: “all trainees teachers should observe good teaching and assessment of reading and phonics, and have their practice in these areas assessed” (p. 3). The findings of the study revealed that those teachers who have to teach as generalists seemed less comfortable and confident to teach reading: their commentaries from their interviews indicate that they lack the skill to teach phonics. This is in contrast with a set of case studies analysed from across Canada, as it was found that teachers who are mostly successful are those who have been trained and having experience in the language taught (Millar, 2008). Therefore, their pedagogical subject knowledge affects their practices in the classroom and how the learners learn reading. This is affirmed by the study carried out by Sibanda & Madome, (2000) that revealed that the trend towards specialisation has begun to have adverse effect on the minor subjects taught by the generalist teachers in Botswana context. This has been re-affirmed by the argument made by the Republic of Botswana, (1993) that “one factor that both teachers and the general public consider to affect the quality of teaching and learning at primary level is the generalist teacher” (Section

4.8.35). The exception to this was if the teacher was keen to upgrade the skills acquired from training by seeking additional professional help, as did Phetso.

Research in ESL has argued that context plays an important role in determining the teaching and learning process that take place in the classroom (Oakhill & Beard, (1999); Soler & Openshaw, (2006). Soler & Openshaw, (2006) view context as those things which influence expectations and technical cultures of teaching because the internal aspects such as individual pedagogical beliefs and knowledge shape the pedagogical practices of reading. Therefore, drawing from Soler & Openshaw, (2006); Fresch, (2008) and their perspective of constructivist and socio cultural processes of teaching and learning reading, it is evident that the teachers in this study are influenced in their pedagogical practices by the training experiences they have received, and by the Botswana practice of specialisation.

## **8.5 Challenges**

Teaching reading in Botswana Primary School is faced with challenges of shortage of libraries, lack of teaching and learning resources that seem to hinder teachers to perform their pedagogical practices effectively.

### **8.5.1 Teaching and learning resources**

The teachers' commentaries showed that they face challenges of shortage of textbooks. This was also evident in most of the classes during their practices. The findings revealed that in some of the classes it was observed that more than two learners had to share the textbook and this was also a constraint as it made reading difficult for them. Therefore, teaching where there is shortage of textbooks seems that, it is one of the factors that contribute to reading failure. It was observed that it was difficult in some of the classes to conduct the activities as planned because of shortage of reading texts. This exactly matches with the findings of the study conducted by Adenyinka & Samson, (2007) which revealed that Botswana primary school learners do not have good reading habits due to lack of reading resources and shortage of libraries. The results of the studies by Clark & Foster, (2005); OECD, (2002); Clark, (2010) revealed that learners' who participated in the study felt that they find most of the information that they want from the school library, thus helping them to understand their school work and they also tend to love reading and

improve in reading attainment. This also received considerable criticism even from media as Mmegi, Editor (2006) reported shortage of reading “textbooks” in primary schools of which deprive learners the ability to learn how to read. This is an indication that the problem is not only acknowledged by those in the teaching field but also by the community at large.

This study also shows that due to shortage of reading materials, a standard three class was obliged to use dictionaries for standards 1-2 which had short comings of not corresponding fully with what the teacher intended to teach as some of the words were not included in the dictionary. Although surrounding learners with ample suitable books have been found to enhance their reading development, it can be argued that an environment, which is rich in literature, is not sufficient for learning to read unless appropriate practices are provided. This is complementary to the findings by Grabe & Stoller, (2001) that choosing texts that have rich activities in an environment that have ample reading resources and continuously revising pedagogical reading approaches help young learners to be effective proficient readers. In contrary, the findings of the study revealed that reading practices are influenced by learners’ home and cultures, therefore; those from deprived background do not enjoy reading because in an African context, not only would not living with parents mean less opportunity for sharing books together, but it might also mean that learners were not having sufficient nutritional input, both of which might influence reading achievement (Smith & Barrett, 2010).

## **8.6 Conclusion**

As this study shows, the development of reading in L2 is directly dependent on and reflective of teachers’ instructional practices especially because learners are learning to read in a language in which they are not yet proficient. Therefore, it is important that teachers know as much as possible about the cultural, linguistic and educational background of their learners since many of these factors affect and influence reading in an L2 context.

The study revealed that teachers’ classroom practices are not always consistent with their pedagogical subject knowledge. This shows that they might lack the expertise of teaching some of the reading approaches such as the phonics instruction. Therefore, they seem not keen to expose their lack of confidence in the class. This might also be due to the challenges that they

face of shortage of teaching and learning resources and a lack of pre-service training in some of the reading approaches. Shortage of textbooks as indicated in the findings seems to impede the way the teachers carry out their classroom instructions. This is because it is not easy to develop the reading skill if more than three learners are sharing a textbook since they do not read at the same pace. The findings in my study also revealed that teachers seem not to have been adequately developed during pre-service. This is because those teaching as generalist seems not to teach Languages as competent as those who specialised in languages. However, the findings revealed that even those who specialised in Languages seemed to lack confidence in teaching phonics. This also reflects back to a lack of pre-service training in phonics instruction. Nevertheless, teachers are aware that they are faced with certain challenges especially in terms of teaching reading in L2 context. Therefore, their realization of these factors denotes that their conception of their pedagogical practices is not just about their abilities but also on other limiting factors such as social and cultural context, which contribute to teacher-centred approaches that prevail in their classrooms.

In the following chapter, I shall focus on implications, limitations and recommendations for further research.

## **CHAPTER 9: IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

### **9.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the implication and limitations of this study in relation to the teaching of reading in L2. Recommendations are made for the benefit of ESL teachers' pedagogical practices, teacher educators, education programmes and future research. It is argued that although the implications discussed are specific to Botswana context, fruitful insights can be gained and applied to other pedagogical practices in similar contexts.

### **9.1 Implications**

The findings of the study have raised a range of implications for ESL teacher education, educational research and curriculum development in Botswana from which certain conclusions can be drawn. It is evident that teachers are aware to a certain extent of effective pedagogical practices for L2 reading and how they should be employed in the classroom. This is because most of them mentioned appropriate reading approaches similar to the ones mentioned in the literature review. However, they seem not to always implement what they hold as their beliefs in their practices. Instead they resort to some of the pedagogic choices that they regard as safe for the maintenance of their authority and avoiding challenging tasks.

It is important that the distinction should be made explicit between teachers' espoused pedagogical subject knowledge beliefs and their pedagogical practices, in order to identify the possible gaps that need to be addressed. Therefore, in terms of pedagogical practices of phonics instruction, it is evident that there is a need for more support in implementation through professional help for teachers in schools. It is evident that the teachers were not provided with sufficient knowledge in phonics instruction during pre-service training. It was noticeable that in the urban school that had professional development on phonics instructions, the two teachers seemed to have pedagogical knowledge of how to teach phonics which matched with their practices. They even avoided using translation by using varied strategies to make the instructions clear for the learners.



Pre-reading activities should be used with every reader regardless of what standard the child might be, because these activities are very important. However, in this study, most of the activities utilised by teachers to activate learners' background knowledge seemed to focus much on word level rather than sentence level or accessing the meaning of the text. Therefore, the implication is that teachers' pedagogical practices are not designed in a way that could provide learners with opportunities to develop their comprehension skills.

In relation to social identities, the study revealed that reading in L2 for some of these learners can be considered as being alienated from their everyday lives. It seems that in most cases, there is no continuity of using what they read from their classroom to their home environment or vice versa. This seemed to impact on learners' participation where they are often seen to play minimal roles in spoken active contribution in the classroom. Therefore, there is a need for teachers to increase their knowledge of the learners' home backgrounds and to better understand how these factors impinge on their pedagogical practices.

The study also raised other issues concerning teachers' pedagogical practices that have no relation to their pedagogical subject knowledge of teaching reading. It seems the teachers were not always aware that in some cases the learners who seemed not eager to participate in the class were not necessarily nervous or lacking self-esteem in reading competency. Some of them have their own personal reasons that could be understood when the subject matter was probed into and apprehended from their perspectives instead of thinking that they seem to be shy.

The findings of the study revealed that there is a need to structure pre-service training in such a way that it incorporates components dealing with theoretical and practical issues on language teaching. In the present teaching situation, where teachers teach as generalists, support services, adequate resources and professional development should be created for them so that they face the world of work with confidence. This is because lack of physical resources might also act against their pedagogical practices by restricting their ability to show competence in handling instructions in classes effectively.

The findings have revealed that an absence of effective strategies for standardised assessment is a weakness in the majority of schools. This reflects a general uncertainty about criteria for progression and achievement in teaching of reading. This calls for a standardised method of assessment that can be incorporated into the policy, so that it can be used by all Primary schools in Botswana to assess reading. I strongly feel that formative assessment should be part of the continuous progress of reading and should be measured concurrently as the reading skill is developing. This is because teachers explained that they assess reading by answering written questions, while others use spelling for the purpose. The assessment methods employed by teachers seem not to measure the effectiveness of reading, as the reading comprehension is assessed mostly at word level.

In order to learn more about teachers' pedagogical knowledge and practices in L2 reading in Botswana, there is need for more studies which gather further data. Therefore, more research on L2 reading in general as well as on components of reading is needed in order to better understand and refine how best L2 reading can be taught. The findings yield evidence that future studies designed for longer duration should be carried out. The research studies should focus on pedagogical practices and learning of L2 reading including teaching and learning materials which could have a greater impact on ESL reading teaching and learning.

## **9.2 Limitations imposed by the scale of the study**

The major limitation that I found when writing the study was that I could not find relevant studies, which fully dealt with my area of research on how teachers' pedagogical subject knowledge influence their classroom practices of L2 reading in Botswana lower primary schools context. This is because the studies that I could find, dealt mostly with general teaching in Botswana Secondary education not in the context of the study. Therefore, the included research studies in this study did not provide much data, which gives an explicit distinction of how the pedagogical practices of L2 teachers match with their espoused pedagogical subject knowledge beliefs in the context of the study.

In addition, it was observed that all the participants were females, which indicates that they dominate in the lower primary education in Botswana. This calls for more male teachers in the

teaching field because from the ten teachers interviewed, all were female. Therefore, the researcher's assumption is that girls might outperform boys in reading as they are much closer to the female teachers.

The study is limited to some areas of Botswana and therefore cannot be described as a national study, generalising about L2 reading in Botswana. The selection of the schools was a convenience sample and the time available to conduct the research was a further limiter on the size and representativeness of the data. The time factor was a concern because the research was conducted during the beginning of the year and teachers were still getting acquainted with their classes. Furthermore, it was really an inconvenience for teachers and learners to accommodate a visitor and other activities that are outside the time of their schedule. However, the researcher had organised her time very well in order to meet the deadline for gathering complete data as planned.

### **9.3 Recommendations**

From what the researcher has observed and what this study and other studies have revealed, the following recommendations are made in order to improve the quality of pedagogical practices of effective reading in primary schools in Botswana:

- I recommend that teachers should be equipped with strategies of how to teach decoding skills because integrating a systematic program that includes phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonic knowledge, sight word knowledge, context use strategies, and fluency is crucial in the learning and teaching of reading.
- Enhancing comprehension through instructional strategies as well as accessing background knowledge is vital for every teacher in Botswana Primary Schools because vocabulary knowledge helps comprehension and also builds background knowledge to increase reading achievement.
- This study suggests that although different strategies and approaches were used among the teachers, the same elements and philosophies were required to effectively teach

reading in the classroom. Therefore, insightful teachers are required to use appropriate materials, methods, and management to ensure literacy across the curriculum.

- Teachers and Educationalists should be encouraged to carry out more studies on how effective reading in Primary schools should be taught. By so doing, the government would realise the significance of teaching and learning of reading across the curriculum.
- The Breakthrough to Setswana method is found to be effective in teaching learners how to read and should be adopted to teach English reading. This is because employing the method will enhance learners to acquire comprehension skills in English by the end of the standard two and preparation phase. This would also make reading much easier across the curriculum during immersion phase.
- Libraries should be built in all Primary schools. They should also be equipped with enough reading texts in order to expose learners to a variety of reading materials that can assist them to be effective independent readers. This would also expose them to abundant opportunities for a wide choice of reading materials. It has been discovered that greater success is achieved where reading materials are carefully chosen for different abilities, and the learners have time to read and discuss them with their teacher and classmates.

#### **9.4 Conclusion**

There is no correct way of teaching reading. One method may work with one child but fail when it is used with another, just as in the English adage ‘One man’s meat is another person’s poison’. Thus, it is important that teachers should use varied approaches and methods in developing reading in early reading. I feel that this research would help serve as a baseline for future studies in teachers’ pedagogical practices in L2 reading. The future research in reading should focus in how pre-service implements the pedagogical practices of reading in L2 context as there is still a lot for teachers to learn if they have to teach it effectively.

Personally, the findings of this study have permitted me to reflect on my role as a teacher educator. From my point of view, I have realised that the success of teaching reading in L2

context in early primary education does not only rest in the hands of the teacher. In many ways, the social and cultural context plays a role in shaping teachers pedagogical practices in the classroom. At the end of the study, I have gained knowledge and came to an understanding that there would not be an ultimate way of teaching reading in early primary education unless the teachers get proper pre-service training. The Ministry of Education should also look thoroughly at education policies as some need to be changed or modified in order to fit well with education system of Botswana.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1 Interview Protocol**

#### **Teachers' Pedagogical Subject Knowledge:**

- (a) Please describe your philosophy of teaching reading.
- (b) What do you think a teacher needs to know in order to teach reading well?
- (c) What kind of skills do learners need to have in order for them to learn to read?
- (d) How would you describe a good teacher of reading?
- (e) How would you describe a good reader?
- (f) Why do you think some learners fail to make progress in reading?

#### **Teachers' Pedagogical Practices:**

- (g) What teaching strategies do you use in your teaching of reading?
- (h) How do you teach each of the following:
  - Letter-sound relationship
  - Pronunciation
  - Word recognition and sight vocabulary
  - Comprehension
  - Fluency
- (i) What do you think is the role of phonics teaching in standards 1-4 in Botswana?
- (j) How do you think comprehension should be addressed in standards 1-4 in Botswana?
- (k) How do you assess readers' progress?
- (l) Do you think the approaches/strategies you use to teach reading are effective?

#### **Challenges in the teaching of reading:**

- (m) What do you consider are the greatest challenges that you face in teaching reading?
- (n) What problems do the children you teach face in learning to read?
- (o) Is there anything else you would like to say about the teaching of reading?

## **Appendix 2: Sample transcript of interview**

**Interviewer:** Please describe your philosophy of teaching reading?

**Interviewee:** Reading is an interactive activity which should not be taken for granted in teaching. This is because it is integrated with the other language arts of listening, speaking and writing. Therefore, teaching sound symbol relationship which is the phonics is very important as they are the basis for learning how to pronounce or come up with words. In lower standards, knowing background knowledge and pupils experiences is very important before teaching reading. This is because the teacher would find it much better when selecting reading materials for children and would also know their strength and weaknesses.

**Interviewer:** What do you think a teacher needs to know in order to teach reading well?

**Interviewee:** Before teaching? The teacher should know different strategies/ methods of how to teach reading and vary them so that the children taught are not bored by the same methods every day. The teacher should be creative in order to come up with the relevant content that addresses the objectives. The teacher should also understand the ability of an individual child and also love reading because modelling reading in class is important.

**Interviewer:** What kind of skills do learners need to have in order for them to learn to read?

**Interviewee:** I think they should listen very carefully and read to understand. Not just reading the words but reading to understand what they are reading about. They should have good speaking and writing skills because for them to read, they need to speak and read a written text.

**Interviewer:** How would you describe a good teacher of reading?

**Interviewee:** I think the teacher of reading should be creative and love reading by modeling and sharing reading strategies and personal joy of reading with children. The teacher should also use integrated subject units based on objectives, pupils' needs and their interest because following the syllabus is a necessity. Engaging pupils in pre reading, during and after reading is very important because step by step activities activate their interest. The teacher should take it slowly so that at the end children really read with competence.

**Interviewer:** How would you describe a good reader?

**Interviewee:** A good reader? A good reader should understand the read text. They should use their prior knowledge as they read and seek assistance if they feel they do not understand or it is difficult for them to use context glue as they read. A good reader builds and enriches vocabulary read by speaking and writing in other subjects, in this way expanding knowledge base for further reading. Pronouncing words and being fluent is important to a good reader.

**Interviewer:** Why do you think some learners fail to make progress in reading?

**Interviewee:** Sometimes it is because a child has no self-confidence then it makes the child to feel as if he does not know how to read. And some are just born like that, they are very shy.

**Interviewer:** Why are they shy?

**Interviewee:** They do not want to make mistakes when reading because they feel that if they make mistakes others are going to laugh at them. Sometimes it is true that the child doesn't know how to read completely, doesn't know the words and what to say. In some cases, they are very reluctant to come to the front to read and would drag their feet and it is really painful to watch.

**Interviewer:** What do you in a situation like that?

**Interviewee:** I personally like counselling them, that if someone is reading we don't have to laugh because we are all here to learn. No one knows everything, I was just like them and today I am a teacher. They should know that if someone makes mistakes, it is not like they have committed crime; it's not a bad thing. They should make mistakes and would get help because we learn from our mistakes. So I like encouraging my students, and most of them don't laugh at each other during reading.

**Interviewer:** What teaching strategies do you use in teaching of reading?

**Interviewee:** Ok. The first method that I use is the phonic method because I want them to understand the sound letter relationship in order pave way to reading words for meaning. I help them in practicing and repeating the phonics because they are still in standard two and I hope that by doing that, they might end up being successful readers. They read in groups because it



helps children to open up so that they end up reading comfortably in front of the class. Guided reading is also important followed by independent reading and I act as a facilitator so that the reading is child-centred. I do pre-reading, during and after reading activities in order to provide opportunities for interaction in the class.

**Interviewer:** How do you teach letter-sound relationship?

**Interviewee:** The letter sounds in English are difficult, it drives them crazy when we are combining the letter sounds in English and to make matters worse, I also find teaching them very difficult.

**Interviewer:** How do you teach pronunciation?

**Interviewee:** I read the words to model how the words are pronounced before they read. They also read individually to check if they pronounce the words correctly.

**Interviewer:** How do you teach word recognition and sight vocabulary?

**Interviewee:** It is to see if they remember the words, but we do them. We do word recognition because if we do another topic and then remember that they have used those words, then I ask, “What did we say this word is? What did we say about this word? ... Then I continue, but those who remember will pick it from there and remember from our previous objective what we have done.

**Interviewer:** How do you teach comprehension?

**Interviewee:** Comprehension? I start with pre-reading activities where we start with new vocabulary; we discuss, and explain meaning of new vocabulary and use the words in sentences before we read. I also write incomplete sentences, so that they fill in the blanks and put the missing words.

**Interviewer:** How do you teach fluency?

**Interviewee:** I read while they are listening to model how they should read. After that, I practice and repeat words or the text read with children before they read individual or in groups. When they read individually, I check if they are fluent and help where necessary.

**Interviewer:** What do you consider are the greatest challenges that you face in teaching reading?

**Interviewee:** The challenge is that in some cases we don't have radio lessons and they are very important. They help children to listen. They can even answer the questions asked by another child on the radio and it helps because they are listening to a voice different from the teacher. There are no reading posters as we used to have in old MAPEP kit. They were useful in the sense that they had illustrations of the content in the text books. Another issue is that of class size which I feel should be reduced. We teach many children and it is not easy to help them individually, 45 is a large number. Breakthrough to English should also be adopted and used in all the schools rather than in pilot schools only.

**Interviewer:** What about parents? Are they helpful?

**Interviewee:** Ooh, with parents, it's a big problem. Like today I was talking to our HoD that we should call parents, because they are not helping us. Even if children are given home work, it is either not done or the parent write for the child. They tell their children that they are tired and do not have time for those kind of things which should be done by teachers because they are paid to teach. Parents make us carry this heavy load alone, and it's heavy like a sack of salt.

**Interviewer:** What problems do the children you teach face in learning to read?

**Interviewee:** They are reluctant to read in class because they lack confidence. They share the text books and it is difficult to do individual reading. Most of them are not assisted at home and giving them work to do at home does not help as their parents are not willing to help them. They do not have varied reading resources and this does not help in any way if they want to practice the reading strategies.

**Interviewer:** Is there anything else you would like to say about the teaching of learning?

**Interviewee:** I would like to attend in-service workshops on how to teach reading. This is because new approaches are introduced and for us who did PTTC long time ago we are only familiar with the traditional methods and we struggle with the new ones. In our school we do not have radios but I strongly feel that children should listen to radio lessons. This is because I am a

standard one teacher, and I have realized that when they listen to a radio lesson, they develop sharp listening skills.

### Appendix 3: Sample transcript of interview codes from NVivo

**Interviewer:** Please describe your philosophy of teaching reading?

**Interviewee:** Reading is an interactive activity which should not be taken for granted in teaching. This is because it is integrated with the other language arts of listening, speaking and writing. Therefore, teaching sound symbol relationship which is the phonics is very important as they are the basis for learning how to pronounce or come up with words. In lower standards, knowing background knowledge and pupils experiences is very important before teaching reading. This is because the teacher would find it much better when selecting reading materials for children and would also know their strength and weaknesses.

Integrated language skills

Role of phonics

Knowledge of learners' background

**Interviewer:** What do you think a teacher needs to know in order to teach reading well?

**Interviewee:** Before teaching? The teacher should know different strategies/ methods of how to teach reading and vary them so that the children taught are not bored by the same methods every day. The teacher should be creative in order to come up with the relevant content that addresses the objectives. The teacher should also understand the ability of an individual child and also love reading because modelling reading in class is important.

Teaching strategies

Teachers' attributes

Syllabus

Knowledge of learners' background

Teachers' attributes

Teaching strategies

**Interviewer:** What kind of skills do learners need to have in order for them to learn to read?

**Interviewee:** I think they should listen very carefully and read to understand. Not just reading the words but reading to understand what they are reading about. They should have good speaking and writing skills because for them to read, they need to speak and read a written text.

Comprehension

Integrated language skills

**Interviewer:** How would you describe a good teacher of reading?

**Interviewee:** I think the teacher of reading should be creative and love reading by modelling and sharing reading strategies and personal joy of reading with children. The teacher should also use integrated subject units based on objectives, pupils' needs and their interest because following the syllabus is a necessity. Engaging pupils in pre reading, during and after reading is very important because step by step activities activate their interest. The teacher should take it slowly so that at the end children read with competence.

Teachers' attributes

Teaching strategies

Syllabus

Teaching strategies

Comprehension

**Interviewer:** How would you describe a good reader?

**Interviewee:** A good reader? A good reader should understand the read text. They should use their prior knowledge as they read and seek assistance if they feel they do not understand or it is difficult for them to use context glue as they read. A good reader builds and enriches vocabulary read by speaking and writing in other subjects, in this way expanding knowledge base for further reading. Pronouncing words and being fluent is important to a good reader.

Comprehension

Integrated language skills

Comprehension

**Interviewer:** Why do you think some learners fail to make progress in reading?

**Interviewee:** Sometimes it is because a child has no self confidence then it makes the child to feel as if he does not know how to read.

Knowledge of learners background

And some are just born like that, they are very shy.

Social cultural factors

**Interviewer:** Why are they shy?

**Interviewee:** They do not want to make mistakes when reading because they feel that if they make mistakes others are going to laugh at them. Sometimes it is true that the child doesn't know how to read completely, doesn't know the words and what to say. In some cases, they are very reluctant to come to the front to read and would drag their feet and it is really painful to watch.

Knowledge of learners' background

**Interviewer:** What do you in a situation like that?

**Interviewee:** I personally like counselling them, that if someone is reading we don't have to laugh because we are all here to learn. No one knows everything, I was just like them and today I am a teacher. They should know that if someone makes mistakes, it is not like they have committed crime; it's not a bad thing. They should make mistakes and would get help because we learn from our mistakes. So I like encouraging my students, and most of them don't laugh at each other during reading.

Teachers' attributes

**Interviewer:** What teaching strategies do you use in teaching of reading?

**Interviewee:** Ok. The first method that I use is the phonic method because I want them to understand the sound letter relationship in order pave way to reading words for meaning. I help them in practicing and repeating the phonics because they are still in standard two and I hope that by doing that, they might end up being successful readers. They read in groups because it helps children to open up so that they end up reading comfortably in front of the class. Guided reading is also important followed by independent

Teaching strategies

reading and I act as a facilitator so that the reading is child-centred. I do pre-reading, during and after reading activities in order to provide opportunities for interaction in the class.

**Interviewer:** How do you teach letter-sound relationship?

**Interviewee:** The letter sounds in English are difficult, it drives them crazy when we are combining the letter sounds in English and to make matters worse, I also find teaching them very difficult to teach.

Role of phonics

Instructional problems

**Interviewer:** How do you teach pronunciation?

**Interviewee:** I read the words to model how the words are pronounced before they read. They also read individually to check if they pronounce the words correctly.

Teaching strategies

Assessment

**Interviewer:** How do you teach word recognition and sight vocabulary?

**Interviewee:** It is to see if they remember the words, but we do them. We do word recognition because if we do another topic and then remember that they have used those words, then I ask, "What did we say this word is? What did we say about this word? ... Then I continue, but those who remember will pick it from there and remember from our previous objective what we have done.

Assessment

**Interviewer:** How do you teach comprehension?

**Interviewee:** Comprehension? I start with pre-reading activities where we start with new vocabulary; we discuss, and explain meaning of new vocabulary and use the words in sentences before we read. I also write incomplete sentences, so that they fill in the blanks and put the missing words.

Teaching strategies

**Interviewer:** How do you teach fluency?

**Interviewee:** I read while they are listening to model how they should read. After that, I practice and repeat words or the text read with children before they read individual or in groups. When they read individually, I check if they are fluent and help where necessary.

Teaching strategies

Assessment

**Interviewer:** What do you consider are the greatest challenges that you face in teaching reading?

**Interviewee:** The challenge is that in some cases we don't have radio lessons and they are very important. They help children to listen. They can even answer the questions asked by another child on the radio and it helps because they are listening to a voice different from the teacher. There are no reading posters as we used to have in old MAPEP kit. They were useful in the sense that they had illustrations of the content in the text books. Another issue is that of class size which I feel should be reduced. We teach many children and it is not easy to help them individually, 45 is a large number. Breakthrough to English should also be adopted and used in all the schools rather than in pilot schools only.

Resourcing

Integrated language skills

Teaching strategies

Teaching strategy

Resourcing

Teaching strategies

**Interviewer:** What about parents? Are they helpful?

**Interviewee:** Ooh, with parents, it's a big problem. Like today I was talking to our HoD that we should call parents, because they are not helping us. Even if children are given home work, it is either not done or the parent write for the child. They tell their children that they are tired and do not have time for those kind of things which should be done by teachers because they are paid to teach. Parents make us carry this heavy load alone, and it's heavy like a

Social cultural factors

sack of salt.

**Interviewer:** What problems do the children you teach face in learning to read?

**Interviewee:** They are reluctant to read in class because they lack confidence. They share the text books and it is difficult to do individual reading. Most of them are not assisted at home and giving them work to do at home does not help as their parents are not willing to help them. They do not have varied reading resources and this does not help in any way if they want to practice the reading strategies.

Knowledge of learners' background

Resourcing

Social cultural factors

Resourcing

**Interviewer:** Is there anything else you would like to say about the teaching of learning?

**Interviewee:** I would like to attend in-service workshops on how to teach reading. This is because new approaches are introduced and for us who did PTTC long time ago we are only familiar with the traditional methods and we struggle with the new ones. In our school we do not have radios but I strongly feel that children should listen to radio lessons. This is because I am a standard one teacher, and I have realized that when they listen to a radio lesson, they develop sharp listening skills.

Professional development

Resourcing

Integrated language skills

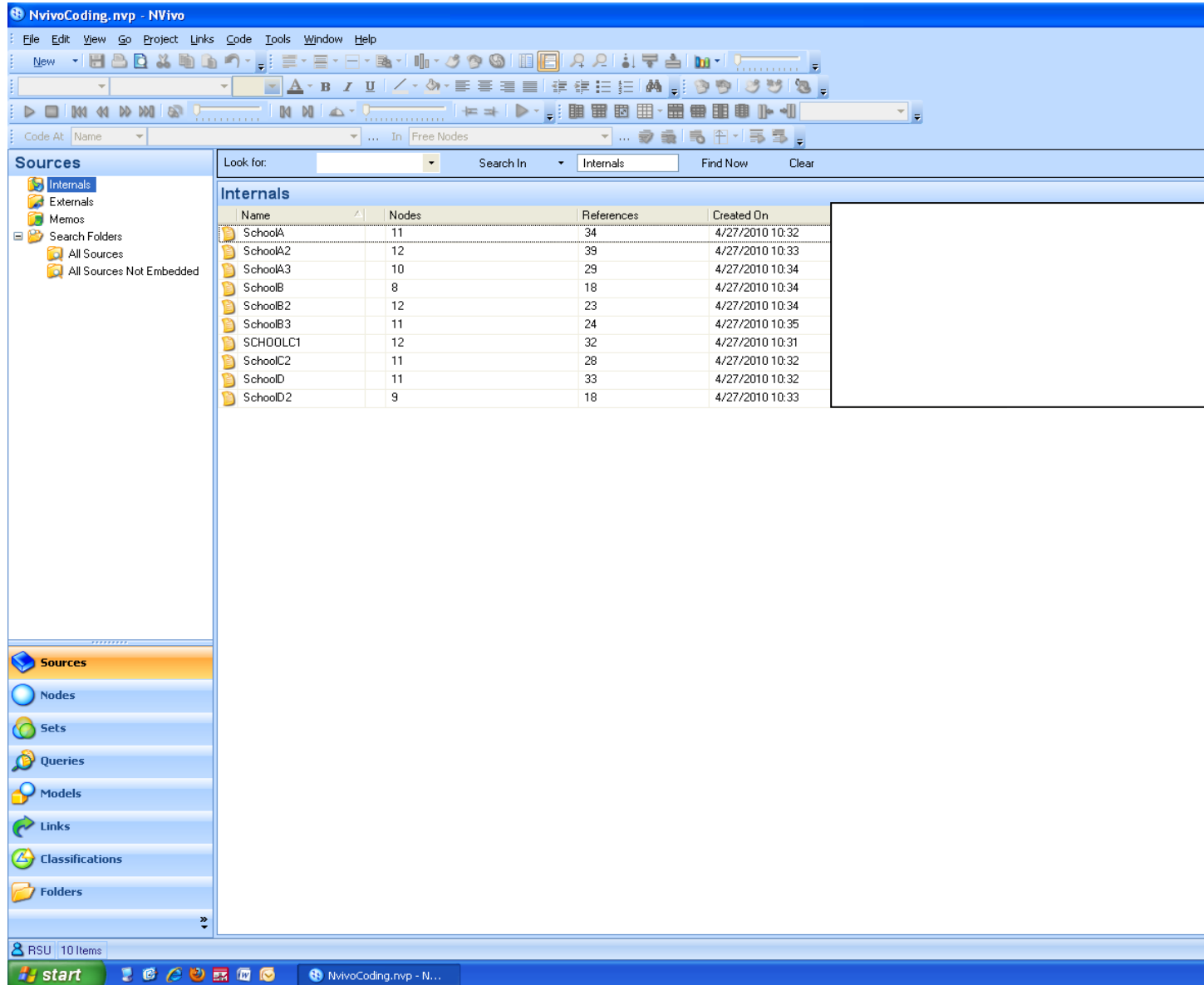
**Yellow** Pedagogical subject knowledge

**Green** Pedagogical practices

**Pink** Challenges



## Appendix 4: Sample of interview NVivo coding



School A .....Pelo

School A2 .....Peo

School A3 .....Maru

School B .....Thobo

School B2 .....Metsi

School B3 .....Namune

School C1 .....Masimo

School C2 .....Matlho

**School D1 .....Masa**

**School D2 .....Phetso**

## Appendix 5: Original observation Protocol by Madden, & Almasi, (2006)

District: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Observer: \_\_\_\_\_  
 LAP Focal Area: \_\_\_\_\_ Reading Intervention Programs: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Number of Students: \_\_\_\_\_ Core Reading Program: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of Observation: \_\_\_\_\_ Time Teacher Spent on Literacy Instruction: \_\_\_\_min.  
 Start Time of Observation: \_\_\_\_\_ Time Children Spent Reading: \_\_\_\_\_ min.  
 End Time of Observation: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Level: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** During observation, place a check mark by the features observed.

Check if Observed	Feature
	The teacher engages the students in the <b>construction of meaning</b> from the text.
	The teacher activates the students' <b>prior knowledge</b> .
	The teacher engages the students in <b>social interaction</b> when reading or learning to read.
	The teacher engages the students in <b>higher order thinking</b> .
	The teacher <b>actively engages students in the reading task</b> .
	The teacher <b>values the students' understandings of print</b> .
	The teacher gives the students <b>adequate time to engage in authentic reading tasks</b> .
	The teacher employs a <b>variety of strategies to model and demonstrate reading knowledge, strategy, and skills</b> .
	The teacher uses strategies to <b>get to know their students and families</b> in deep and personal ways that will enable them to best teach them.
	The teacher uses <b>literature and activities that are culturally responsive and connected to students' backgrounds</b> .
	The teacher has <b>appropriate, culturally responsive interactions</b> with students.
	The teacher has <b>high expectations</b> for each student.
	The teacher arranges their schedule to provide extra time for struggling readers.
	The teacher ensures that <b>extra help given to students who struggle with reading is delivered by the most skilled teacher</b> (i.e., not an instructional aide), someone with advanced skills in literacy instruction.
	The teacher provides the <b>same opportunities to read lively, interesting material to students who struggle</b> with reading as the other students.
	The teacher <b>includes the families of their students who struggle</b> with reading in assisting their child's reading progress.
	The teacher <b>provides instruction to meet a wide range of developmental levels</b> (i.e. emergent, early, and fluent) in phonemic awareness, phonics and word recognition.
	The teacher engages the students in the <b>development of phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency</b> through a variety of authentic literacy opportunities, models, and demonstrations.
	The teacher engages the students in instruction to develop <b>word recognition strategies</b> .

The teacher engages the students in activities that develop their understanding of the <b>connection between reading and writing</b> .
The teacher uses <b>strategies for understanding and constructing meaning of various forms of reading</b> and language arts representation/expression for individual learners.
The teacher helps students purposefully <b>monitor their own comprehension before, during, and after reading</b> .
The teacher engages students in learning to use <b>comprehension strategies through modeling, guided practice, and independent practice</b> .
The teacher uses <b>ongoing assessments (formal and informal) to inform and change daily instruction</b> , specifically to meet individual needs.
The teacher <b>helps students set goals and self-evaluate</b> .
The teacher demonstrates an <b>efficient use of time</b> for implementing and organizing a student centered relevant curriculum.
The teacher implements and organizes <b>equitable access to a student-centered relevant curriculum</b> .
The teacher employs a <b>Balanced Literacy Approach</b> that includes all components of literacy instruction.
The teacher creates an <b>empowering, meaningful, student-centered learning environment</b> where instruction is designed to fit students' needs, interests, cultures, learning styles, etc.
The teacher <b>learns about the ways literacy is used in the culture of the home and community</b> .
The teacher <b>involves parents who historically have not been involved</b> (in realistic ways).
The teacher <b>helps families understand assessment, curriculum and pedagogy</b> .
The teacher <b>plans and implements instruction that corresponds to state curriculum guides</b> .

**Madden, A. & Almasi, J. F. (2006). Transfer of Knowledge from Reading Professional Development to Classroom Practice. National Reading Conference Paper. 12. 01.06**

## Appendix 6: Modified Observation Protocol

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Scheduled length of class: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Topic observed: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of learners: \_\_\_\_\_ Objectives covered: \_\_\_\_\_

Standard level: \_\_\_\_\_ Time teacher spent on reading instruction: \_\_\_\_\_min.

Date of Observation: \_\_\_\_\_ Time learners spent reading: \_\_\_\_\_min.

Start Time of observation: \_\_\_\_\_ End time of observation: \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions:** Place a check mark by the features observed.

Check mark	Features
	The teacher engages the learners in the construction of meaning from the text.
	The teacher activates the learners' prior knowledge.
	The teacher actively engages learners' in the reading task.
	The teacher values the learners' understandings of print.
	The teacher gives the learners adequate time to engage in authentic reading tasks.
	The teacher arranges schedule to provide extra time for struggling readers.
	The teacher engages the learners in the development of phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency through a variety of authentic literacy opportunities, models, and demonstrations.
	The teacher engages the learners' in instruction to develop word recognition strategies.
	The teacher engages learners in learning to use comprehension strategies through modelling, guided practice, shared and independent practice.
	The teacher uses ongoing assessments (formal and informal) to inform and change daily instruction, specifically to meet individual needs.
	The teacher plans and implements instruction that corresponds to the curriculum and teachers' guides.

## Appendix 7: Consent form



### GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation

I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me  
any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which

may include publications

If applicable, the information, which I give, may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) participating in this project in an anonymised form

all information I give will be treated as confidential

the researcher(s) will make every effort to preserve my anonymity

.....

.....

(Signature of participant)

(Date)

(Printed name of

participant) .....

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher(s)

Contact phone number of  
researcher(s): .....

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

.....

OR

.....

Data Protection Act: The University of Exeter is a data collector and is registered with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as required to do under the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for research purposes and will be processed in accordance with the University's registration and current data protection legislation. Data will be confidential to the researcher(s) and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties without further agreement by the participant. Reports based on the data will be in anonymised form.

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